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# An Assessment of the Perceived Instructional Leadership Behaviors of Assistant Principals

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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PERCEIVED INSTRUCTIONAL  
LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by  
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## **Abstract**

### **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PERCEIVED INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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This study examined the extent to which the role of the assistant principal is perceived to include instructional leadership behaviors. Specifically, this study compared the perceptions of instructional leadership practices of elementary, middle, and high school assistant principals from the perspectives of assistant principals, principals, and teachers. A nonexperimental comparative design was used. Quantitative data were collected via a version of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale that was

adapted for application to *assistant* principals. Analysis of variance, independent-samples *t*-test, correlation, and nonresponse bias analysis were conducted. Effect size and standard error were calculated. Results indicated that the mean scores given by principals were the highest given by any of the three role groups and those given by teachers were the lowest including the lowest seven mean subscale scores among all role groups. Analysis of variance and *t*-test results of survey responses indicated that, though statistically significant differences were identified regarding school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater, no practical differences were found. Results further indicated that there was a negligible relationship between experience and ratings of assistant principal instructional leadership. Recommendations include those related to suggestions for continued research on this topic as well as implications for the practice of instructional leadership for assistant principals.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

In the current climate of accountability and the accompanying mandate of standards-based achievement tests, school principals are expected to possess a range of proficiencies to lead their schools toward educational excellence. One important example of such proficiencies relates to a group of behaviors categorized as instructional leadership skills. Vick (2011) states that assistant principals perform many of the same tasks as principals; by extension, it is asserted that assistant principals likewise are expected to function as instructional leaders. This study allowed for the collection of data in order to critically analyze this assertion.

### **Background**

The publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) broadly announced that America's future is in jeopardy due to a prevailing attitude of complacency and mediocrity in its education system. Findings of this report include: the curricula of

secondary schools had become diluted, resulting in significant numbers of students no longer participating in vocational and college preparatory programs; expectations of American students had become deficient as reflected in the amount of homework, amount of class hours spent in science and math classes, and number of electives units that counted toward graduation requirements; ineffective use of classroom time; an alarming number of teachers were being drawn from the bottom quartile of college graduates; and a severe shortage of math and science teachers. Generally, this report exposed many shortcomings in the American educational system, claiming that American schools did not hold students to high enough standards, teachers were not adequately prepared to perform their jobs, students were not being held accountable for working hard enough, and students were not studying the correct subjects. In short, *A Nation at Risk* asserted that American students simply are not learning enough. This publication launched an era of unprecedented scrutiny of America's public schools.

The uproar caused by the accompanying condemnation of America's schools resulted in sweeping educational reforms, particularly those that emphasized improving educational outputs. One such reform was the evolution of the perceived role of the building principal. Prior to the release of *A Nation at Risk*, principals were seen as *managers* of schools who focused predominantly on such tasks as placing teachers in classrooms, providing textbooks, and getting students to attend school regularly (Bottoms, 2001). Following the release of this report, and in conjunction with research focused on the Effective Schools movement, principals were required to emphasize



improving the quality of teaching and learning, guiding their schools toward excellence as *instructional leaders*; accordingly, principals were expected to assume the role of influential leaders who had comprehensive knowledge about curriculum and instruction as well as the skill to guide their schools toward educational excellence (Allen, 2003).

Despite this new emphasis on the principal's primary role changing from manager to instructional leader, the managerial expectations of leading schools still exist. Indeed, though a typical principal performs a large variety of tasks each day, only a small percentage of these tasks relates directly to instructional leadership (Chell, 1995). Few principals act as genuine instructional leaders because their days are filled with the activities of management – a situation that is exacerbated by the fact that school districts often expect principals to be instructional leaders yet reward them for well-managed, efficiently operated schools (Smith & Andrews, 1989). For instance, the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management (1999) states that “we automatically expect the trains to run on time, but the real job is to move instruction forward” (p. 5). This conflict in expectations for school leaders increases the difficulty of effectively exercising instructional leadership.

Given the nature of today's comprehensive schools, with the inherent pressures of a standards-based climate of accountability, the responsibility of leading a school is too challenging for one person (Gorton, 1987; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Lively, Lenz, & Ritsch, 2002; MacCorkle, 2004; Spady, 1985). A one-person, heroic notion of school leadership does not acknowledge the considerable contributions that can be made by

assistant principals and is no longer relevant. Frequently referred to in school leadership literature as “distributed,” “shared” or “democratic” leadership, this perspective emphasizes that school leadership is a much stronger predictor of school improvement and student achievement when leadership is distributed broadly across multiple roles including assistant principals (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Spillane, 2005). Accordingly, due to increased demands placed upon principals, the traditional role of assistant principals has similarly changed; assistant principals must share duties once held primarily by principals (Matthews, 2003). Such duties include specific aspects of instructional leadership including framing the school’s goals, communicating the school’s goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, promoting professional development, developing and enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 1983, 2008; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

### **Research Problem and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the perceived changes in the role of the assistant principal, particularly the extent to which the role now includes instructional leadership responsibilities. Specifically, this study compared the perceptions of assistant principals, principals, and teachers regarding the extent to which assistant principals are involved in instructional leadership activities in their buildings. This study

explored the possibility that a paradigm shift exists regarding the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals. Assistant principals are no longer autocratic managers and disciplinarians in their schools; rather, assistant principals make significant contributions to their schools as instructional leaders.

This study contributes significantly to the body of knowledge in the field of educational leadership because research on assistant principals is not common and that on assistant principals as *instructional leaders* is almost non-existent (Celikten, 2001; Howard-Schwind, 2010; Story, 1991; Vick, 2011). As the delineation of roles between principals and assistant principals blurs, assistant principals must develop their skills as instructional leaders in order to impact the climate of success in their schools. This dissertation serves as an important contribution to the analysis of data about the role of assistant principals and their instructional leadership behaviors.

### **Research Questions**

Research was necessary in order to gather appropriate information and analyze data pertaining to the research problem that this study addressed. To determine the extent to which assistant principals are perceived to participate in providing instructional leadership in their schools, the following research questions were considered:

1. What are the perceptions of assistant principals regarding their instructional leadership practices?

2. What are principal perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?
3. What are teacher perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?
4. Are there differences in perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders by school level, gender, and role of the rater?
5. Does a relationship exist between experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools?

### **Methodology**

To explore the research questions in this study, I used a nonexperimental comparative research design. I collected data by using an anonymous and voluntary Web-based survey instrument that measured the perceived frequency with which assistant principals exhibit instructional leadership in their buildings. An advantage of an Internet-based instrument was the ability to significantly reduce the cost of the survey due to the near total elimination of paper, postage, and data entry. A Web-based survey additionally allowed for the collection of a large amount of information from a sample population, as well as the compilation of descriptive statistics, in a very short time (Dillman, 2007; McMillan, 2004).

The survey instrument used to collect quantitative data for this dissertation was a version of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger, 1983) that was adapted, with permission from the copyright holder and publisher, for application to *assistant* principals (Appendix A). This specific instrument was used because it is a commercial instrument that has been used many times in studies and dissertations, it focuses on specific behaviors related to instructional leadership, and because the components of the instrument are based on research related to effective current practice.

The PIMRS was designed to assess three dimensions of instructional leadership: Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate (Hallinger, 1983, 2005, 2008). Each of these dimensions was further defined by specific, behaviorally anchored instructional leadership job functions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The survey consisted of 70 items, not including demographic and open-ended questions. Responders assessed the frequency with which assistant principals were perceived to practice behaviors associated with that particular instructional leadership function. Each item was rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from "almost never" to "almost always." The instrument was scored by calculating the mean for the items that comprised each subscale/job function.

The target population in this study was assistant principals in a large suburban school district in Virginia as well as principals and teachers who worked with these assistant principals at the time the survey was administered. At the time the study was

conducted, the targeted school district consisted of 60 comprehensive elementary (grades K-5), middle (grades 6-8), and high schools (grades 9-12).

Three parallel versions of the PIMRS survey were used. A self-assessment version was completed by assistant principals, and principals and teachers with whom the assistant principals worked at the time of the survey likewise completed a version of the survey. The questions which comprised each form were identical except that the stems were changed to reflect the differing perspectives of the role groups.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study compared the perceptions of assistant principals with those of principals and teachers to examine the degree to which the role of the assistant principal is perceived to include instructional leadership behaviors. Cronbach's alpha, used to measure the internal consistency for all items within each subscale of assistant principal instructional leadership in the survey instrument, indicated that all reliability coefficients were in the acceptable range (0.80) or above (McMillan, 2004), thereby comparing favorably with the internal consistency coefficients of Hallinger's (1983) original application of this instrument.

Regarding responses to survey questions about assistant principal instructional leadership, assistant principal mean responses ranged from a high of 3.21 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to a low of 2.33 (promoting professional development). Mean scores from principals ranged from 3.59 (framing the school's goals) to 2.54

(protecting instructional time). Teacher mean responses ranged from 2.69 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to 1.89 (maintaining high visibility). Overall, the mean scores given by principals were the highest given by any of the three role groups and those given by teachers were the lowest including the lowest seven mean subscale scores among all role groups.

Analysis of variance and *t*-test results of survey responses indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices based on school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater. However, tests for practical significance, specifically  $\eta^2$  and Cohen's *d*, reflected that none of these statistically significant differences was meaningful; though statistically significant differences were identified regarding school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater, no practical differences were found.

Because response rates were low for principals and teachers, nonresponse bias analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which principals and teachers who did not reply to the original survey have opinions or attitudes about assistant principal instructional leadership that are different from those who responded to a second administration of the survey. Results of nonresponse bias analysis indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices based on whether the responders took the original survey or the new administration of the survey. Principals who took the new administration of the survey rated assistant principals lower than those who took the original administration of the

survey. However, teachers who took the new administration of the survey rated assistant principals higher than those who took the original survey. Statistically significant differences in mean scores were noted. Therefore, the responses from principals and teachers who took the new administration of the survey were different from those who took the original survey.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to examine whether a relationship exists between years of experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools. Results indicated that there was a negligible relationship between experience and ratings of instructional leadership.

Answers to open-ended questions were analyzed. According to results, principals perceived that activities on which assistant principals spend the majority of the day are classified as instructional leadership activities whereas teachers, in contrast, perceived that activities on which assistant principals spend the majority of the day are classified as managerial activities. When asked about what prevents assistant principals from spending more time on activities directly related to instructional leadership, assistant principals, principals, and teachers alike gave the same response – student discipline. When asked to suggest professional development activities that would better prepare assistant principals to provide instructional leadership, most suggestions from the respondent groups related specifically to growth opportunities in the instructional leadership domain. Assistant principals and principals were also asked about the extent to which assistant principals felt



professionally prepared, regarding their instructional leadership, to serve as building principals. Approximately half of responding assistant principals indicated that they felt ready for the instructional leadership responsibilities of building principals, and 70% of responding principals felt that their assistant principals were prepared to be principals based on observances of their instructional leadership. Of those who responded in the negative, many felt that assistant principals only needed more experience.

### **Definition of Terms**

Assistant Principal: A professional person in a school building who is next in authority to the principal and who will act as principal in the absence of the principal; a person who holds an administrative certification and who typically has the duties and responsibilities of an entry-level administrator in a school.

Principal: One who holds a position of presiding rank, especially the head of an elementary school or secondary school.

Instructional Leadership: Demonstration of strong school leadership, especially in the areas of curriculum and instruction; direct responsibility for improving teaching and learning; those actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to support growth in student and teacher learning.

Manager: Refers to a traditional school leader who spends the majority of her time dealing primarily with administrative duties such as student discipline and supervision of student activities.

Web-based Survey: A type of questionnaire distributed via the Internet to collect data that will be used for this study.

PIMRS: Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale; the specific instrument that will be used to collect data for this study. Originally developed by Philip Hallinger (1983) to assess dimensions of the instructional leadership construct for principals, the instrument will be adapted in this study to assess instructional leadership behaviors of *assistant* principals.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Review of Literature**

This study strives to add to the limited body of research on assistant principals as instructional leaders. In order to comprehend the significance of this study, it is necessary to understand previous scholarship related to the topic under consideration. According to Boote and Beile (2005), educational exploration must cumulatively build on prior research in order to be useful and meaningful.

Much of the literature on effective schools, particularly that which relates to instructional leadership, focuses on the *principal* as the key to improving student achievement. Less attention in the professional literature is given to the role and function of the assistant principal because the assistant principal traditionally has been considered as a school employee whose primary purpose is to relieve some of the principal's daily load (Glanz, 1994).

In more recent years, however, educational researchers have analyzed the extension of the assistant principal's role to include activities related to instructional leadership (Howard-Schwind, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Robinson, 2007; Vick, 2011). In order to fully understand this focus on assistant principals' instructional leadership functions, it is informative to understand the historical development of the position.

Accordingly, this chapter will illuminate the early development of the role as an “assistant” to the principal, relegated to essentially menial, noninstructional duties. This chapter will then explore how the role of the principal was redefined to focus on instructional leadership as a result of literature related to the effective schools movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Due to a number of obstacles to effective instructional leadership experienced by principals however, opportunities materialized for assistant principals to share instructional leadership responsibilities in their schools.

### **Search Process for Literature Review**

The review of literature for this study progressed through several purposeful steps. At each step, sources were reviewed and then decisions were made to include or exclude these sources from the literature review based upon relevance to this study. The initial step involved examining published and unpublished dissertations, predominantly through Dissertation Abstracts Online. Key words used to generate a list of studies included combinations of terms such as: “instructional leadership;” “assistant principal;” “assistant” with “principal” and “instruction\*” with leader\*,” “roles” and “assistant” and “principal;” and “Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale.” The second step involved the use of electronic databases and search engines such as ERIC and Google Scholar in order to track pertinent journal articles and books. The third step involved the perusal of reference lists in relevant dissertations, journal articles, and books. This search process resulted in the review of 150 or more dissertations, articles, books, and book chapters.

### **Historical Development of the Assistant Principalship**

The position of public school assistant principal developed in response to changes in the responsibilities of principals as a result of increased enrollments in the early twentieth century (Glanz, 1994; Martin, 1997). According to Glanz, the position of school principal dates back to the early 1800s. However, principals had little authority to affect policy or implement programs and curricula because daily control of schools was handled primarily by superintendents. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the principal filled a position referred to as “head teacher” or “chief teacher” (Glanz; Madden, 2008; Story, 1991). The head teacher was responsible for attendance and other administrative reports, taught some classes, and provided professional assistance to less experienced staff in matters including lesson development and classroom management.

Immigration patterns in the early decades of the twentieth century created a dramatic increase in student enrollments in schools (Martin, 1997; Mertz, 2006). The total school enrollment in the United States increased from 14 million students to 21.5 million students in the years between 1895 and 1920 (Glanz, 1994). As urbanization intensified, superintendents relinquished responsibility of operations of schools to building principals. Enrollment numbers continued to rise. As a result, the number of principals doubled during the decade between 1920 and 1930. Professional expectations of school administrators grew in direct correlation to student enrollment numbers. Because principals were no longer able to manage all the tasks earlier associated with the

role of head teacher, other supervisory positions emerged to support the needs of an ever-growing and complex school system (Glanz).

Two such administrative support positions that emerged as a result of growing demands on principals were “special supervisors” and “general supervisors” (Glanz, 1994). Special supervisors, most often female, were relieved of some of their teaching responsibilities in order to fill the master teacher void left by principals in the wake of increasing enrollments. Similar to today’s department chairs, special supervisors were responsible for providing assistance to less-experienced teachers in subject matter mastery. Larger schools had special supervisors for every major subject area, and some schools in the 1920s and 1930s even had special supervisors in fine and performing arts programs (Glanz).

General supervisors, by comparison, were almost always male and were chosen specifically to assist principals in the daily logistical management of the school. These general supervisors were given limited responsibility to observe and evaluate classroom instruction. Additionally, they performed other managerial duties such as preparing attendance reports and supervising school programs. As noted by Glanz (1994), the responsibilities of special supervisors were gradually usurped by general supervisors such that the position practically ceased to exist during the early 1920s, primarily as a result of gender discrimination. Accordingly, the general supervisor soon became the primary “assistant” to the principal. By the 1940s and 1950s, Glanz states, the “literature more

accurately reflected the relationship between principal and general supervisor by using the title ‘assistant principal’” (p. 39).

### **Early research emphasized managerial focus**

Van Eman (1926) was among the first to publish a study specifically concerned with the functions of assistant principals. For many years following its release, this study was considered the benchmark concerning issues surrounding the assistant principalship (Gillespie, 1961; Story, 1991). The Van Eman study was conducted to determine to what extent 52 of the largest high schools in Ohio utilized assistant principals, department heads, and faculty advisers, as well as to determine what specific administrative duties were carried out by each of these groups. An analysis of the duties performed by secondary assistant principals indicated that the duties performed with the greatest frequency included checking pupil’s schedules, supervising of clubs, supervising student attendance, and supervising extra-curricular activities. The study also found that the duties of assistant principals were defined almost entirely by the principal of the school.

Story (1991) writes that throughout the 1930s, the role of assistant principal was seen mainly as custodial and clerical in nature, the primary purpose of which was to free the principal from the dull and routine tasks associated with running the school. For instance, Edmonson, Roemer, and Bacon (1931) stated that assistant principals in the 1930s commonly were assigned duties including: “general disciplinary control; locker management; daily schedule; pupil program adjustments; office management, records,

forms, and reports; traffic and assembly management; acting as boys' advisor; management of athletics; direction of student activities; business management ...; administering general matters otherwise unassigned; and acting as principal when the principal is away" (p. 59).

This trend in clerical, mundane types of duties for assistant principals continued for several decades, though the position began to take on greater national significance as illustrated by a series of articles published in NASSP Bulletin in 1946. Boardman (1946) argued that the assistant principal position should include experiences in responsibilities relating directly to supervision of curriculum and instruction, thereby serving as an internship for the principalship. Gran (1946) found that assistant principals in Wisconsin held either primary or shared responsibilities in curriculum and school control; however, specific duties in supervision were minor. Holt (1946) wrote that, while the position continued to be more or less clerical in nature, a clear trend toward assigning broader areas of responsibility to assistant principals had emerged.

Literature in the 1950s showed some promise regarding professional advancement and recognition of the assistant principalship. To illustrate, Story (1991) writes that the assistant principal "began to take on more the look of the head principal," but the reality was that the position continued to be clerical in nature – a position in which the assistant principal "performs the mundane, day to day [sic] duties of maintaining the school, known in the field as 'putting out fires,' with little involvement in the instructional areas such as curriculum development, instruction, and evaluation of staff" (pp. 7-8). Similarly,



Weiss (1953) studied the duties of 66 assistant principals in the Middle Atlantic area and determined that assistant principals devoted a great deal of time to administration and management tasks such as parent conferences regarding pupil discipline. He also wrote that pupil welfare continued to play a significant role in the responsibilities of assistant principals, and that the 52-hour work week had become a mainstay in the life of assistant principals. Brandes (1956) and Jarrett (1958) concurrently concluded that the title for the position varies but that the designation of “assistant principal” was used most frequently, that the qualifications and academic requirements for assistant principals should be the same as those for principals, and that the principal is responsible for determining the duties and assignments for assistant principals.

Evidence from 1950s literature further suggests that assistant principals were growing tired of being relegated to routine tasks. In one study, Bolden (1956) assessed the attitudes of 120 assistant principals located in various medium to large cities regarding the duties assigned to them. Results indicated that assistant principals felt that duties relating to the over-all direction of the school program, to pupil welfare, to educational programs of students, and even to the assignment of substitute teachers were appropriate; however, those duties relating to managerial aspects, to supervising the detention room, to routine clerical tasks, and to the calling of substitutes were not appropriate.

Responsibilities of principals, likewise, focused primarily on the managerial aspects of running schools. It was not until the release of the Coleman Report (Coleman

et al, 1966) – and the subsequent research on effective schools – that principals began to focus on guiding their schools as instructional leaders. This paradigm shift had a direct impact on the role of assistant principals as well.

### **Development of the Principal as Instructional Leader**

Research on effective schools came about in reaction to the findings of a seminal study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education commonly referred to as the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966). This study presented evidence that characteristics predating a child's entry into school – socioeconomic status, parental education level, general social context, home and neighborhood influences, peer environment – are more important in determining educational outcomes and overall student achievement than factors such as teacher quality and per pupil expenditure. In response to this study, some researchers looked for schools that were effective in educating students regardless of socioeconomic status or family background and then sought to identify common characteristics that made these schools successful (Jackson, 1982; Lezotte, 2001). These studies became the basis of the Effective Schools Movement (Edmonds, 1979; Weber, 1971).

The Effective Schools research was grounded in the belief that all students can learn despite family background and that educational institutions control the elements necessary to promote successful academic performance. These studies identified several common attributes that eventually became known as the Correlates of Effective Schools;

notably included among these attributes is that all instructionally effective schools included in the studies were led by principals who actively coordinated and controlled curriculum and instruction in their schools (Hallinger, 1983; Lezotte, 2001). The reform movement embodied by the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) focused on the building principal as the key to any kind of change (Clabo, 2010; Lively, Lenz, & Ritsch, 2002). Additionally, researchers asserted that effective schools have effective leaders, and that one of the most important leadership roles that principals must accomplish in effective schools is the role of instructional leader (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Zheng, 1996). The expression “principal-as-instructional-leader” became a trend among educational researchers in the 1980s (Zheng).

The conceptual framework of instructional leadership emerged from the literature on effective schools (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Clabo, 2010; Hallinger, 1983; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986b; O'Day, 1984; Weber, 1971); indeed, Clabo asserts that inception of the instructional leadership model was a direct result of effective schools research. Weber conducted a seminal study of effective schools. He studied four successful inner-city schools – two schools in New York City, one in Kansas City, and one in Los Angeles. This observational case study was noteworthy because its methodology was markedly different compared to the quantitatively-oriented school effectiveness studies of the 1960s. Weber's study was used as a standard against which to compare other research on effective schools (Clark, Lotto, & Astuto (1984).

Hallinger (2003) suggests that a review of such literature on effective schools leads to general observations regarding instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is a role carried out by school principals (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Instructional leaders possess a strong and directive leadership style that is instrumental in demonstrating success at “turning around” schools otherwise perceived as unsuccessful, particularly those schools in poor urban communities (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee; Edmonds; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, 1986a). Instructional leaders build a sustainable culture in their schools that promotes high expectations and standards for students as well as for teachers (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986a; Purkey & Smith, 1983b). Instructional leaders utilize a mixture of expertise and charisma. They are viewed as hands-on principals who work directly with teachers on improving teaching and learning and who focus specifically on the improvement of student academic outcomes (Edmonds; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986a; O’ Day, 1984).

Instructional leadership behaviors by principals play a significant role in improving student learning (Blase & Blase, 2004; Dowling, 2007; Hallinger, 2003). Cotton (2003) states that, since the beginning of research about principals’ impact on student achievement, studies have consistently shown that “principals who are knowledgeable about and actively involved in their schools’ instructional program have higher-achieving students than principals who manage only the noninstructional aspects of their schools” (p. 25). Such instructional leadership by principals has been found to

rank second only to the individual classroom instruction of teachers with regard to enhancing student achievement (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Dowling, 2007; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Given the continuing passage of formal mandates for student success in today's climate of accountability, Southworth (2002) suggests that principals who ignore expectations for monitoring and improving overall school accomplishments concerning their role as instructional leaders do so at their own peril.

### **Obstacles to Effective Instructional Leadership**

Reviews of effective schools research depict the building principal as the most important factor in promoting school wide instructional improvement (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986b; Lezotte, 2001; Purkey & Smith, 1983a; Zheng, 1996). Problematically, those principals who aspire to be truly effective instructional leaders face several obstacles (Ginsberg, 1988).

#### **Unclear and inconsistent definitions**

A clear and consistent description of the term instructional leadership is elusive. Principals are admonished to be instructional leaders without specificity about what, exactly, the role requires (Chell, 1995). While variations in definition stress the significance of keeping teaching and learning in the vanguard of academic decision making, the term *instructional leadership* is often more a catchphrase than a precise set

of leadership practices and expectations (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Early definitions of instructional leadership from the 1980s typically involve traditional tasks including goal-setting, apportioning resources specifically for instructional purposes, reviewing teachers' lesson plans, administering the curriculum, and observing teachers' practices in a classroom setting (Lashway, 2002). Traditional definitions also feature the principal's role as master teacher, emphasizing specific expertise in curriculum and instructional matters; as master teachers, principals frequently visit classrooms and then meet with teachers to debrief the experience and provide detailed suggestions regarding the improvement of teaching skills (Zheng, 1996).

More recent definitions of instructional leadership are described as richer and as more expansive than definitions in the 1980s (Lashway, 2002). Such definitions include deeper participation in the core technology of teaching and learning, hold more sophisticated expectations for staff development, and frequently rely on the use of data to drive decisions. Accordingly, attention has shifted from teaching to learning; the phrase *learning leader* is often preferred over *instructional leader* (Lashway).

Other variations of definitions and expectations for instructional leadership exist. Instructional leaders are expected to observe teaching and encourage higher student performance, track results from student test standardized test scores and other indicators of student learning in order to help teachers focus learning where it is most needed, plan meaningful staff development, challenge staff members to scrutinize conventional

assumptions about teaching, and provide opportunities for teachers to work together to plan instructional strategies. Wilhoit (2004) states that instructional leadership involves making decisions that support teaching and learning, establishing organizational direction, developing and supporting high performance expectations for teachers, creating a learning culture in the school, and developing leadership capacity. Smith & Andrews (1989) assert that instructional leaders provide necessary resources so that academic goals can be achieved, possess knowledge and skills so that teacher interaction with school leaders results in improved instructional practices, are skillful communicators, and create a visible presence both physically and philosophically concerning the vision and mission of the school. De Bevoise (1984) describes instructional leadership simply as those activities that a principal takes or delegates to others to encourage increased student learning.

The uncertainty of precisely describing instructional leadership makes it difficult for practitioners to become effective at its practice (Ginsberg, 1988). A range of definitions of instructional leadership leads to miscommunication and conflict (Avila, 1990). The inability of writers, researchers, and practitioners to agree on a clear and consistent definition of behaviors creates an obstacle for leaders who seek to improve their skills as instructional leaders.

### **Too many demands on the time of principals**

The importance of the instructional leadership responsibilities of school principals is entrenched in the professional rhetoric. In theory, instructional leadership includes those actions that principals take to promote teaching and learning, and all other activities in schools are secondary to these fundamental goals (De Bevoise, 1984; Hoy & Hoy, 2006). In practice, however, the everyday work of principals is often at odds with the research (Chell, 1995; Zepeda, 2003). The typical day for principals is strewn with unanticipated interruptions, noninstructional requests from teachers, discipline issues, and otherwise is so demanding that there simply is not enough time left in the day to devote to instructional leadership activities (Ginsberg, 1988; Smith & Andrews, 1989).

Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) summarize the dilemma of principals in light of today's climate of standards-based accountability and heightened expectations. These authors state that principals are not only expected to be educational visionaries and instructional and curriculum leaders, they are also expected to be:

Assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to broker the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students, district officials, unions, state and federal agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs (p. 1).



Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach (2003) suggest that making instructional leadership the ultimate outcome of school leadership may ultimately miss the point; given the myriad demands placed on principals daily, it is not reasonable to expect them to also spend hours in the classroom. Even though emphasis on the primary role of principals evolved from being managers to being instructional leaders following the release of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the managerial aspects of the position have not ceased to exist. Chell (1995) declares that a typical principal carries out a vast number of tasks each day, but only about 11% relate to instructional leadership. Principals are not able to act as genuine instructional leaders because their days are literally filled with the activities of managing schools. Principals spend little time in classrooms and less time analyzing instruction with teachers (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

The daily conflict created by demands on the time of principals increases the difficulty of exercising instructional leadership. This conflict is exacerbated by the fact that school districts expect principals to be instructional leaders yet reward them for well-managed, efficiently operated schools (Smith & Andrews, 1989). Experts differ regarding the emphasis of one role over the other; for example, Dembowski (1998) and Hoy & Hoy (2006) emphasize instructional leadership over management, while the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management (1999)

states that “we automatically expect the trains to run on time, but the real job is to move instruction forward” (p. 5).

### **Inadequate training of principals for instructional leadership**

Many principals feel that instructional leadership is the role for which they are the least well prepared. The National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management (1999) suggests that as many as three-quarters of principals are not skilled as leaders of instruction. This is due in part to the fact that many school leaders do not find their graduate education very useful, particularly in the area of instructional leadership (Duke, 1987). Because this skill set is not afforded much importance in the formal training of principals, instructional leadership is considered to be the “equivalent of the holy grail in educational administration” (Hoachlander, Alt, & Beltranena, 2001, p. ii). Though many educational administrator training programs claim to be in the business of educating the next generation of instructional leaders, these programs typically place greater emphasis on such matters as financial management, labor negotiations, and community relations (Hoachlander, Alt, & Beltranena). Many principals express great frustration regarding the growing expectations surrounding their performance as leaders of instruction when, in fact, their university programs have actually trained them to be building managers (Smith & Andrews, 1989). Because principals’ instructional leadership skills are not as well-developed as other skills, they

are inclined to visit classrooms less frequently, perhaps only to make required formal observations (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

Typical university professors of educational leadership preparation programs do not model instructional leadership, nor do they have experience as practicing administrators; consequently, such professors focus on the theory of leadership and not on the practice of leadership tasks and functions (Dembowski, 1998). Administrator preparation textbooks similarly focus on theories of leadership and organizational studies, and such textbooks are noticeably lacking in quantity and quality regarding reports of research in the areas of instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 1999; Glanz, 1994). Because professors and textbooks concentrate on theories to the relative exclusion of instructional leadership behaviors and practices, students indirectly learn that management and organizational are the most important issues in becoming effective administrators (Dembowski).

Principals who aspire to be effective instructional leaders are hindered by issues of inadequate training. These hindrances exist to such a degree that “principals who develop the skills and knowledge required to become [effective] instructional leaders do so because of their own preferences and values – and often at some cost to their own careers. The institutional structure does not promote, or select for, knowledge and skill in the area of teaching and learning. At best, it tolerates the few who cultivate them” (Hoachlander, Alt, & Beltranena, 2001, p. ii).

## **Movements for teacher empowerment**

Calls for teachers to play a more significant role in the instructional leadership of the school present an obstacle to principals serving in this role. Various movements for teacher empowerment have resulted in principals distancing themselves from teaching and learning. Such movements assert that pedagogy is the intellectual property of individual teachers and that intrusion by a principal is a violation of teachers' professional classroom decisions (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Combined with the traditional view that evaluation and support represent two disparate functions of a principal's professional responsibilities, principals are further discouraged from assuming a more active role as an instructional leader within their schools (Fink & Resnick).

Teachers often possess more instructional expertise than administrators (Dembowski, 1998; Hoy & Hoy, 2006). For instance, many teachers have completed four plus years of undergraduate coursework in education and subject-related fields, have proficiency in curriculum and teaching, and even have advanced degrees in their subject areas. Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach (2003) ask: "Is it reasonable to expect principals to know more about instruction than teachers who have done it longer (and who might have passed up opportunities to become principals because of their dedication to the classroom)? Does it make sense to expect high school principals to lead disciplinary instruction in mathematics, history, English, physics or biology?" (p. 7).

Some researchers suggest that leadership in instructional matters should emerge from a partnership forged between teachers and the principal whereby teachers deliver

the instruction in the classroom and the principal promotes and protects a school climate conducive to providing the best instructional practices (Blase & Blase, 2004; Hoy & Hoy, 2006). Such collaboration, though fruitful regarding student achievement, often results in principals being even farther removed from their function as instructional leader.

### **Other obstacles**

Experience as a classroom teacher, considered mandatory for aspiring principals, nevertheless contributes to the difficulty of becoming an effective instructional leader. Duke (1987) specifies that those desiring to become instructional leaders should recognize that many aspects of the process by which they become principals may not advance the cause of instructional improvement:

Instructional improvement ... requires a positive orientation to new ideas and a facility for working with adults. Those selected as school leaders, however, are often people with extensive teaching experience – experience that frequently fosters a skeptical attitude toward change. To teachers, innovations often represent short-lived experiments intended more to advance the reputations of administrators than to improve the welfare of students and faculty. Years of working with young people in classrooms also is no guarantee that new leaders will be capable of effective interactions with adults (p. 274).

The interview process for their positions is reported to have a negative effect on principals' ability to develop instructional leadership skills (Duke, 1987). Such interviews rarely address instructional capabilities, stressing instead the ability of applicants to manage and operate schools. Additionally, principals who are new to a building traditionally focus on getting to know people and procedures rather than implementing the changes that are frequently necessary to implement improvements to instruction. Duke contends that new principals are often reluctant to press their faculties for change because innovation and improvement often involve destabilization and conflict.

As the impact of leadership on student success continues to be explored, policymakers place greater pressures on principals. Rewards and sanctions affecting principals are increasingly common and such pressures inhibit principals' effectiveness as instructional leaders. For example, California law threatens to fire principals as one possible consequence for low-performing schools (Public Schools Accountability Act, [California] Senate Bill 1X, 1999, as cited in Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). In Portland, Oregon, a small portion of a principal's salary is based on a set of professional standards linked to student outcomes (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson). Merit pay systems for administrators and teachers, based in part on student achievement, continue to be explored (Azordegan, Byrnett, Campbell, Greenman, & Coulter, 2005; Gratz, 2005; Murnane & Cohen, 1986; National Governors Association, 2007; Solomon & Podgursky, 2000). Such trends support the notion that not only do principals play an extremely important role in the achievement of students, but

they are held increasingly accountable for such achievement; the resulting pressures on principals negatively impacts effective instructional leadership.

The prerequisite for gains in student achievement is improvement in the instructional capabilities of school leaders. Smith & Andrews (1989) state that “observations of the average principal and the strong instructional leader suggest that they both value the same things about their jobs, but the strong instructional leader is not as distracted by the routine parts of the job as the average principal. The strong instructional leader focuses on the curriculum and instruction” (p. 38). Managers focus on running an efficient school while instructional leaders focus on teaching and learning. These roles, however, are not mutually exclusive. Though the principal’s instructional leadership role is crucial in developing an effective school, principals cannot be successful instructional leaders if they are not good managers. Chell (1995) asserts that the roles of manager and instructional leader should not be viewed as isolated entities. Nevertheless, principals are not expected to be superheroes that do it all (Lively, Lenz, & Ritsch, 2002) and may need considerable aid in juggling the myriad demands of the position (Greenfield, 1982; Gross, 1987). Accordingly, effective schools increasingly utilize assistant principals to share instructional leadership duties once held primarily by principals (Matthews, 2003).

### **The Assistant Principal as Instructional Leader**

Assistant principals are generally acknowledged as important players in schools (Madden, 2008; Spady, 1985). They often have more extensive daily interaction with teachers and students than principals (Greenfield, 1985a; Marshall, 1993). Nevertheless, most of the research on assistant principals is merely descriptive, is rarely informed by theory, and does not contribute significantly to the body of knowledge concerning the conditions, substance, and impact of the work of assistant principals (Greenfield, 1985a). Many of the studies on assistant principals address the same or similar research questions that concern the role of the assistant principal, the perceived relationship of this role compared to the roles of other site administrators, and the perceived relationship of this role compared to the organizational environment of the school (Reed & Connors, 1982). Such studies yield a sizeable *quantity* of information, yet offer little insight concerning the nature of the position or its relationship to the overall organization of the school (Reed & Connors). In short, typical research on assistant principals represents little more than a status report.

For example, Reed & Connors (1982) identify several categories of research topics focusing on assistant principals. Such topics of study include the existence and distribution of the position of assistant principals (see Austin & Brown, 1970; Reed & Connors), personal characteristics (see Austin & Brown; Long, 1957), qualities of the role (see Black, 1980; Boardman, 1946; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Jarrett, 1958; Marshall, 1993; Pietro, 1999), job satisfaction and attitudes (see Armstrong, 2004; Austin &



Brown; Loomis, 1981; Marshall, 1992; Story, 1991; Thompson, 2005), career characteristics (see Greenfield, 1985b; Oliver, 2005; Pellicer & Stevenson, 1991), and duties (see Calabrese, 1991; Gaston, 2005; Gillespie, 1961, Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002; Jarrett; Koru, 1993; Mizelle, 1995; Reed & Himmler, 1985; Van Eman, 1926; Wright, 1994).

Interest in the assistant principalship as a research topic continues to increase, with particular focus on the assistant principal as an instructional leader. The myriad demands on contemporary principals necessitate sharing the responsibilities of instructional leadership with assistant principals (Bartholomew, Melendez-Delaney, Orta, & White, 2005; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Karpinski, 2008). Despite characteristically being relegated to managerial duties such as maintaining the norms and rules of the school, assistant principals report that they desire to become more involved in curricular and instructional matters (Bartholomew, Melendez-Delaney, Orta, & White; Celikten, 1998; O' Prey, 1999). Though formal job descriptions often refer to their instructional leadership duties, assistant principals remain an untapped resource because daily expectations of the position exacerbate the gap between their assigned versus their desired instructional leaderships duties and responsibilities (Bartholomew, Melendez-Delaney, Orta, & White; Martin, 1997).

Comparatively recent studies on the instructional leadership behaviors of assistant principals focus on several common themes. Several such studies explore whether significant differences in the practice of instructional leadership exist regarding variables

such as assistant principals' background, years of experience on the job, ethnicity, gender, and school level (Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002; Matthews, 2003; Robinson, 2007). Several studies concentrate on whether assistant principals receive adequate leadership training in instructional leadership to prepare them to become principals (Champeau, 1993; Dowling, 2007; Madden, 2008; Owen-Fitzgerald, 2010; Wright, 1994). Other studies focus on whether assistant principals receive appropriate opportunities to practice instructional leadership (Auclair, 1991; Celikten, 1998; Champeau, 1993; Dowling, 2007; Gaston, 2005; Howard-Schwind, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Martin, 1997; Mizelle, 1995; O' Prey, 1999; Thompson, 2005). Still other studies address the effect on instructional leadership of perceived pressures on administrators related to state performance standards, No Child Left Behind legislation, and other accountability requirements (Howard-Schwind, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Sun, 2011).

### **Effect of demographic variables on instructional leadership**

Several studies on the instructional leadership behaviors of assistant principals focus on variables such as the background of administrators and school demographics. Robinson (2007) conducted a quantitative study to ascertain how assistant principals are being prepared for instructional leadership. Sixty-six African-American and Caucasian assistant principals completed a survey designed by the researcher. The assistant principals worked in elementary, middle, and high schools representing twelve school districts in South Carolina. The survey required the respondents to identify how they

performed instructional leadership duties in their schools. Matthews (2003) surveyed principals and assistant principals from high schools in six counties in north Alabama to examine perceived misconceptions regarding instructional leadership responsibilities of assistant principals. This quantitative study was conducted to verify if significant differences exist between the perceptions of principals and assistant principals concerning instructional leadership interactions with students and teachers, if this process is directly related to the formal responsibilities of assistant principals, and to delineate between the actual and the ideal roles of assistant principals concerning instructional leadership. In both of these studies, findings indicate that factors such as level of school, ethnicity of administrator, school enrollment, age and/or number of years as an assistant principal, and level of education have no significant effect on the perceptions of principals and assistant principals concerning the instructional leadership of assistant principals. However, significant differences are found in the perceived amount of time spent on instructional leadership according to the gender of the assistant principal.

Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson (2002) conducted a random survey of assistant principals of all public and approved private schools in Maine serving students ranging from kindergarten through grade twelve. The survey assessed how assistant principals allocate their time, at what roles and professional activities they feel successful, and the relationship between perceived success and ratings on a quality of worklife [sic] scale. Pertinent questions asked respondents to indicate how frequently they engaged in certain assistant principal activities. These activities were arranged into

seven sub-scales signifying major roles of assistant principals, notably including “instructional leadership.” Results indicate that years of teaching experience affect the amount of time assistant principals spend on instructional leadership activities, that years of experience as an administrator does not result in more time devoted to or success at instructional leadership, that female assistant principals spend more time on instructional leadership behaviors than their male counterparts, and that female assistant principals are more successful at instructional leadership activities than male assistant principals.

### **Training as instructional leaders in preparation to become principals**

A number of studies address the extent of instructional leadership preparation of assistant principals for the responsibilities of the role of principal. Madden (2008) conducted a quantitative study to explore the extent of on-the-job training afforded to assistant principals to prepare them to become principals. Ideal versus actual task performance was examined in six competency areas. Results indicate that assistant principals perceive tasks associated with instructional leadership to be the highest ranked among those that should be performed in preparation for becoming a principal. In contrast, principals rank tasks associated with management of the school, personnel administration, and oversight of student behavior higher than those associated with instructional leadership. Findings further indicate that the job of assistant principal is not adequate preparation for becoming a building principal.

Dowling (2007) conducted a quantitative study of 100 assistant principals from rural, suburban, and urban school districts in Ohio to explore the relationship between assistant principals' instructional and transformational leadership style and the effect on student achievement. Respondents completed a questionnaire to rate the time spent during the work day in which they were engaged in a variety of instructional and transformational leadership activities; student achievement results were then correlated with the reported amount of time spent on instructional and transformational leadership tasks. Findings indicate in part that assistant principals receive no leadership training relative to instructional leadership.

Wright (1994) directed a quantitative study to evaluate the relationship between the assigned duties of assistant principals and their training for the principalship. Newly-appointed principals completed a questionnaire on the skills and competencies needed by assistant principals to be prepared for the role of principal. The study concludes that instructional leadership is the most important competency needed by an assistant principal to become a successful principal but that the role of assistant principal presents little preparation for the leadership competencies expected of building principals.

Owen-Fitzgerald's (2010) research contrasts the studies above that signify that assistant principals do not receive adequate instructional leadership training to appropriately prepare them for the principalship. This quantitative study surveyed the professional development of high school assistant principals and the effects of such professional training on job performance. Seventy-five assistant principals in

comprehensive high schools in California completed a Web-based survey. Results of this study differ from ideas postulated in current research; Owen-Fitzgerald's work indicates that, rather than needing more training in instructional leadership, assistant principals require more expertise in tasks related to preparing school budgets and scheduling.

Auclair (1991) contends that, while assistant principals receive some training for the instructional leadership role of the principal, the extent of this training depends significantly upon the degree to which the school's administration functions as a team. This study utilized a qualitative approach to examine the middle level assistant principal regarding the degree of training received for the instructional leadership role of the principal. The researcher interviewed 24 middle level administrators in Connecticut including eight assistant principals, eight principals with three or fewer years of experience in the position, and eight principals from effective schools as identified by the U.S. Department of Education. The interview questions were designed to elicit responses concerning how the administrators perceived they were trained for the role of principal in each of 12 identified functions of instructional leadership. The assistant principals perceived receiving on-the-job preparation for the principalship in eight of the 12 instructional leadership functions.

### **Opportunities to practice instructional leadership**

Various studies on assistant principals' instructional leadership practices reveal that many traditional managerial tasks persist, thereby hindering opportunities to engage

in leadership of curriculum and instruction. Dowling (2007) submits that assistant principals spend the bulk of their time on discipline and other managerial responsibilities, that they have limited opportunities to participate in instructional and transformational leadership activities, and that they perceive they would have a greater effect on closing the achievement gap if their assigned duties allowed them to have more time to devote to instructional and transformation leadership.

Todd (2006) studied the effect on student achievement of instructional leadership behaviors of high school principals, assistant principals, and math department heads. The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger, 1983) was used to gather data from all public high schools in five of the seven largest counties in Florida. Results indicate that principals practice instructional leadership activities at a higher frequency than assistant principals and math department heads. Todd suggests that the administrative organization of schools and the assignment of duties be examined in order to have greater impact on student achievement.

Thompson (2005) examined the role and job satisfaction of assistant principals relating to their level of involvement in instructional leadership behaviors. Data were collected from 112 secondary school assistant principals in rural and urban school districts among five states located in the Rocky Mountain region. Results suggest that assistant principals experience a lack of job satisfaction as a result of their limited involvement in the instructional leadership tasks of their schools.

O' Prey (1999) compared the perceptions of middle school principals, assistant principals, and teachers regarding the assistant principal as an instructional leader. A multiple case qualitative design was utilized consisting of a survey of assistant principal role functions as well as structured interviews and observations made at school sites. The sample consisted of 10 urban and suburban school districts in a southwestern metropolitan area near Houston. Results indicate that assistant principals spend a vast majority of their time on non-instructional tasks. Most of the respondents expressed a desire for assistant principals to spend more time on instructional leadership tasks and other curriculum-related matters. O' Prey suggests that assistant principals may not undertake instructional leadership tasks due to their perception that the principal wants them to fill a more traditional, managerial role.

Martin (1997) directed a mixed methods study to investigate the differences between the assigned and the desired instructional leadership responsibilities of high school assistant principals. Selected principals and assistant principals in a large, urban public school system completed surveys, and interviews were later conducted using the results of the survey as a prompt to generate interview questions. Results suggest that both principals and assistant principals want assistant principals to have more instructional accountability.

In a quantitative study of the delegated instructional leadership functions of high school principals, Champeau (1993) issued a questionnaire to all high school principals in the state of Wisconsin, asking them to indicate who in their building performed each of



25 identified instructional leadership tasks. Results indicate that all of the respondents delegate certain of the instructional leadership tasks if there were other persons to whom such tasks could be delegated. Assistant principals are primarily delegated tasks including student discipline and communicating with parents about student behaviors; assistant principals rarely are delegated instructional leadership activities including creating a healthy instructional climate and working directly with teachers to eliminate poor instructional practices. Additionally, results demonstrate that the leadership functions seen by principals as being the least important are those most often delegated to others.

Celikten (1998) conducted an interview-based qualitative study, the results of which reveal factors that both enhance as well as inhibit instructional leadership activities of assistant principals. This study focused on daily tasks in assessing the role of 25 high school assistant principals in Wisconsin and their instructional leadership duties. Factors that enhance instructional leadership activities include support and encouragement received from their principals, having a good relationship with central office administrators, reading educational journals, and attending workshops and other curriculum-related activities. Factors that inhibit instructional leadership activities include having too wide a variety of daily duties to perform (the majority of which are not written in a formal job description), having little time to focus on curriculum-related issues due to dealing with student discipline issues, having little time or resources to attend workshops or conventions, frequently changing school law, and dealing with politics. Celikten recommends that typical non-instructional duties of assistant principals

such as discipline, attendance, and bus duties be rotated among administrators so that assistant principals have more time to actively participate in curriculum and instructional planning activities.

In contrast to results noted in studies above, several studies suggest that assistant principals do, in fact, receive appropriate opportunities to practice instructional leadership. Howard-Schwind (2010) executed a quantitative study to explore the degree to which secondary assistant principals in large Texas schools exhibit instructional leadership behaviors as described in current literature. The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger, 1983) was used to quantify responses by 375 principals and assistant principals. Results of this study indicate that assistant principals perceive they practice instructional leadership at a high frequency and that principals perceive assistant principals similarly practice instructional leadership at a high frequency. Results further indicate that administrative responsibilities should be restructured in order that assistant principals have more time to focus on instructional leadership.

Kirkpatrick (2010) designed a qualitative, multi-case study to analyze instructional leadership activities of 13 assistant principals in four Midwestern high schools. Interviews with the assistant principals garnered descriptions of their specific instructional leadership behaviors as well as perceptions of obstacles to their effective practice of instructional leadership. Findings suggest that assistant principals are involvement in an extensive number of instructional leadership activities.

Gaston (2005) identified and documented the responsibilities of assistant principals in Virginia as compared to existing literature on assistant principals. Data were collected from a random stratified sample of principals and assistant principals from 50 elementary, 50 middle, and 50 high schools. Results signify that assistant principals in Virginia participate in instructional leadership behaviors in the range of occasionally to often – a finding that contradicts literature that characterizes assistant principals as spending the majority of their professional time on student discipline and other managerial tasks (e.g., Austin & Brown, 1970; Greenfield, 1985a; Reed & Himmler, 1985; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993).

Results are mixed in Auclair's (1991) qualitative study of middle level schools in Connecticut. This research analyzed the role of the assistant principal regarding 12 identified functions of instructional leadership. Findings demonstrate that assistant principals report they are involved to a high degree in three of the instructional leadership functions, are involved to a moderate extent in five of the functions, and are involved to a low degree in four of the functions.

Mizelle (1995) used a qualitative design to examine assistant principals in urban public high schools in Virginia to determine how the role has changed as a result of the restructuring process. The author reports that literature reviewed for this study reveals that the instructional leadership role of the assistant principal in general as well as in schools that are restructuring is largely ignored. Results of the study, however, contradict

the professional literature and show that responsibilities for curriculum and instruction are the primary duty of assistant principals.

### **Effects of perceived pressures related to accountability requirements**

Some studies on the instructional leadership functions of assistant principals address perceived pressures resulting from state standards, No Child Left Behind legislation, and other accountability-driven educational reforms. Sun (2011) employed a mixed methods approach in a study of the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in New York to analyze the influence of educational accountability requirements on instructional leadership. Data were collected by surveying 133 assistant principals and interviewing 10 others, and results were compared to a 1994 study. Findings suggest that the overall types of responsibilities of assistant principals has not changed since the 1994 study; however, the amount of time spent on managerial activities has decreased and the amount of time spent on tasks associated with instructional leadership has increased. Assistant principals acknowledge that educational reforms related to No Child Left Behind legislation significantly influence the nature of their professional responsibilities. Howard-Schwind (2010) studied the instructional leadership behaviors of secondary assistant principals in Texas. Findings indicate that principals and assistant principals feel more professional pressure and engage in instructional leadership activities to a higher degree as a direct effect of accountability requirements, state assessments, and No child Left Behind regulations. Kirkpatrick (2010) reports that pressures related to the No Child Left Behind

and Race to the Top initiatives have resulted in more emphasis on the instructional leadership role of assistant principals in order to directly impact the instructional culture of the school.

### **Origin of Dissertation Topic**

The topic for this dissertation originated as a project for a doctoral class on educational research designs. Atkinson & McGee (2008, unpublished) conducted a similar, though scaled-down, version as a requirement for this class. The specific purpose of this class project was to compare the perceptions of middle school and high school principals and assistant principals regarding the degree to which secondary assistant principals were involved in instructional leadership behaviors in their buildings during the 2007-2008 school year.

Research questions for this study included the following:

1. Is there a difference in administrator perception of instructional leadership behavior based on school level (high school v. middle school)?
2. Does length of service as an educational administrator affect the opportunities for secondary assistant principals to perform instructional leadership behaviors in their school?
3. Is there an interaction effect in administrator perception of instructional leadership behavior by position level and school level?

A nonexperimental comparative post-hoc design was used to test the research questions in this class project study. The instrument used to collect the data was an anonymous electronic survey. The survey was a version of the PIMRS (Hallinger, 1983) that was adapted by the researchers for application to *assistant* principals. The instrument was further adapted, per the advice of the instructor, by deleting certain sub-scales of the original survey instrument in order to reduce the total number of questions. Additionally, the researchers created an original sub-scale that measured the degree to which assistant principals engaged in professional learning communities in their buildings.

Data were collected from 12 public middle schools and 11 public high schools in a large suburban school district in Virginia during the spring of 2008. The sample was comprised of principals, assistant principals, and other entry-level administrators in the aforementioned secondary schools. This convenience sample was selected for accessibility reasons because the researchers also worked in this school district at the time of the study and had a simple way to access the administrators identified in the sample via a networked email system. Surveys were distributed to 96 administrators, of which 42 (44%) were completed and returned.

In addition to certain demographic questions, the survey consisted of 30 statements that described assistant principal job practices and behaviors. Principals responded to the statements with a specific assistant principal in mind who represented the typical assistant principal in their schools, while assistant principals and assistant administrators responded to the statements as they pertained to their own practices and behaviors.

Respondents rated the frequency of instructional leadership behaviors using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “almost never” to “almost always” being involved in such activities.

Independent variables for this study included school level (high school and middle school), present administrative position (principal, assistant principal, and assistant administrator), and length of service as an administrator in the current position (broken into five levels). The dependent variable was assistant principal instructional leadership behavior. This variable was analyzed using six sub-scales within the dimension of instructional leadership. The sub-scales addressed the degree to which assistant principals exhibited the following behaviors: Protects Instructional Time; Supervises and Evaluates Instruction; Maintains High Visibility; Provides Teacher Incentives; Promotes Professional Development; and Engages in Professional Learning Communities.

To investigate the first research question pertaining to school level, the researchers ran an independent samples *t*-test. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in the perceptions of administrators in terms of instructional leadership behavior by school level. To investigate the second research question pertaining to length of service as an educational administrator, the researchers conducted a 1 x 5 ANOVA. No statistical differences were found. Accordingly, it was not necessary to run post hoc tests. To investigate the third research question pertaining to possible interaction effects when comparing administrative positions and school levels, the researchers conducted a 2 x 3 ANOVA and similarly found no significant differences.

Weaknesses in this study were considered. Selection was deemed to be the biggest weakness; specifically, the use of a convenience sample represented a threat to external validity. Similarly, the small number of respondents ( $n = 42$ ) was considered a threat to this study. Additionally, subjects effects was considered to be a possible threat because the survey was conducted by administrators who worked in the same school system as the sample; some of the respondents may not have been convinced of the anonymity of their responses to the survey questions.

The researchers recommended further study. One suggestion to improve the project was to ensure a larger sample size. Additionally, it was recommended that further research include the perceptions of teachers who work with the administrative sample in order to extend the study and produce interesting findings. These recommendations were incorporated into this study that represents the focus of this dissertation.

### **Chapter Summary**

The reform movement in American education as a consequence of the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) resulted in school principals being held more accountable for student achievement. It was no longer satisfactory for principals to perform functions related only to the managerial aspects of running their schools; they were now expected to direct student learning as instructional leaders. This push for instructional leadership from principals was directly correlated to research on effective schools.



Since the inception of the position, assistant principals were expected to “assist” principals in the effective management of schools. Traditionally, assistant principals were assigned duties that principals did not want to perform. Such duties historically included tasks such as those related to student discipline, attendance, management of textbook inventories, and supervision of co- and extra-curricular activities.

Educational research on assistant principals is not extensive compared to that on principals. Early research on assistant principals is little more than a status report, focusing primarily on the duties of these professionals and other descriptive aspects of the position. Recent research, however, indicates that assistant principals are perceived as integral members of the administrative team. Moreover, because many factors exist that prevent principals from being effective instructional leaders, this recent research is particularly cognizant of the value assistant principals have as instructional leaders in their schools. However, there is a dearth of research available on assistant principals as instructional leaders. Due to the clear gap in the literature, this study serves as an important addition to the research base.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter focuses first on a statement of the research questions and a description of the variables in the study. Next, the research design and instrumentation are given consideration, with a detailed explanation of the conceptual framework regarding the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger, 1983) survey instrument. This explanation is followed by an overview of the sampling, data collection, and data analysis method.

### **Research Questions**

The aim of this investigation was to compare the perceived instructional leadership practices of the assistant principal from the perspectives of assistant principals, principals, and teachers. The research design proposed to address the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of assistant principals regarding their instructional leadership practices?
2. What are principal perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?

3. What are teacher perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?
4. Are there differences in perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders by school level, gender, and role of the rater?
5. Does a relationship exist between experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools?

This study contributed significantly to the body of knowledge in the field of educational leadership because research on assistant principals in general is not widespread and that on assistant principals as *instructional leaders* is practically non-existent (Celikten, 2001).

### **Variables**

Independent variables for this study are depicted in Figure 1. The positional level of rater had three levels: assistant principal (self-rating), principal rating, and teacher rating. Other variables affecting the instructional leadership practices of assistant principals included the school level (elementary school, middle school, and high school), gender (male and female), and the number of years of experience/length of service as an assistant principal.

Figure 1

### *Description of Independent Variables*

Name of Variable	Description
Rater	Assistant Principal (self-perception), Principal, Teacher
School Level	Elementary School, Middle School, High School
Gender of AP	Male, Female
Experience as an AP	Reported number of years serving as an assistant principal

The dependent variable was assistant principal perceived instructional leadership behavior. This variable was measured using 11 sub-scales/specific categories within the dimension of instructional leadership as developed by Hallinger (1983). The sub-scales were based on existing research and addressed the frequency with which assistant principals practice the following behaviors: framing the school's goals, communicating the school's goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, promoting professional development, developing and enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 1983, 2008; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

### **Research Design and Instrumentation**

Because of the existence of a variety of assessment instruments to measure the performance of school principals, careful thought was given when selecting the instrument for this survey. Those instruments that were considered include: the

Diagnostic Assessment of School and Principal Effectiveness, designed to ascertain the strengths of schools and their leaders in order to better inform school improvement plans and principal professional growth goals; the Instructional Activity Questionnaire, intended to address instructional leadership aspects of the job functions of principals; the Performance Review Analysis and Improvement System for Education, generated through broad review of literature on school administrator effectiveness; the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale, developed to measure the degree to which school principals serve as instructional managers; and the Principal Profile, developed through extensive interviews with principals, teachers, and other school leaders and based in part on the assumption that the effectiveness of school leaders is determined well-defined commitments as well as the skill and knowledge to achieve them consistently (Condon & Clifford, 2012).

The instrument selected for use in this study was a version of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger, 1983) that was adapted, with specific permission from the copyright holder and publisher, for application to *assistant* principals (Appendix A); this adaptation consisted merely of changing the term “principal” to “assistant principal” in the questionnaire. This particular instrument was chosen because it focused on specific behaviors related to instructional leadership and because it has been one of the most common instruments used by researchers to study instructional leadership behaviors of principals (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Todd, 2006). The PIMRS instrument was used in 130 studies at 85 different universities in a 27-year span between 1983 and

2010 including 92 EdD and 38 PhD dissertations. Figure 2 illustrates the frequency with which the PIMRS instrument has been used, indicating wide interest and use of the instrument over a sustained period of time (Hallinger, 2011a).

Figure 2

*Frequency of PIMRS Studies, 1983-2010*

Period of Years	Number of Studies
1983-1990	43 Studies
1991-2000	40 Studies
2001-2010	47 Studies
Total	130 Studies

The conceptual model used in the development of the PIMRS instrument assessed three dimensions of instructional leadership: Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate (Hallinger, 1983, 2005, 2008). Each of these dimensions was further defined by specific, behaviorally anchored instructional leadership job functions. The tasks that comprised each job function did not represent the full range of behaviors necessary for school leaders to provide instructional leadership; rather, each function consisted of a representative sample of critical instructional leadership practices and behaviors as determined by a thorough review of research examining each instructional leadership

function (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Figure 3 depicts the conceptual framework for the PIMRS instrument.

Figure 3

*PIMRS Conceptual Framework*

<b>Dimensions</b>	<i>Defining the School's Mission</i>	<i>Managing the Instructional Program</i>	<i>Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate</i>
<b>Instructional Leadership Functions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frames the school's goals</li> <li>• Communicates the school's goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervises and evaluates instruction</li> <li>• Coordinates the curriculum</li> <li>• Monitors student progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protects instructional time</li> <li>• Maintains high visibility</li> <li>• Provides incentives for teachers</li> <li>• Promotes professional development</li> <li>• Develops and enforces academic standards</li> <li>• Provides incentives for learning</li> </ul>

This study utilized a Web-based version of the survey. Three parallel forms of the instrument were used: a self-assessment form for assistant principals, a form for principals, and a form for teachers. The items that were contained in each of the three

forms of the survey were identical except that the stems changed to reflect the different perspectives among responders. A survey was used because it was able to collect a large amount of information from the selected sample in a short time. A Web-based survey was used because of advantages, suggested by Dillman (2007), including reduced cost and time, easy access, quick response time, and relative ease of entering responses into a database for analysis. Additionally, such an electronic survey was excellent for conducting research in this study because the sample represented a group of educational professionals assumed to be Internet savvy (McMillan, 2004).

Participants responded to 70 behavioral statements that described job practices and behaviors of assistant principals relating to instructional leadership as measured by the PIMRS. The behavioral statements were further categorized into eleven subscales of instructional leadership. Respondents rated the frequency of instructional leadership behaviors of assistant principals by choosing among Likert-style options. To calculate means for analysis, responses were coded 0 for “almost never,” 1 for “seldom,” 2 for “sometimes,” 3 for “frequently,” and 4 for “almost always.” Because statements were positively worded, recoding of responses was not necessary.

For each item on the survey, the responder assessed the frequency with which the assistant principal performed a behavior or practice associated with that specific instructional leadership function during the previous school year. The instrument was scored by determining the mean of the items that comprised each subscale; the resulting



profile yielded data on perceptions of assistant principal performance on each instructional leadership function.

The original validation study (Hallinger, 1983) established that the PIMRS meets high standards of reliability. Specifically, all subscales exceeded .80 using the Cronbach alpha test of internal consistency. The original validation study further tested the PIMRS instrument for face validity, content validity, and discriminant validity. Initially, the instrument was determined to be valid at the elementary school level; however, subsequent studies expanded on the validity of the instrument (such as O'Day, 1984).

The PIMRS ratings did not measure the *quality* of assistant principal instructional leadership. A high score on a particular measure of leadership did not indicate effective performance but rather only perceived leadership (Hallinger, 2008). Assistant principals who received high ratings across the range of job functions were perceived as engaging in instructional leadership tasks correlated with leaders in effective schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The data generated from this study was analyzed to identify patterns of instructional leadership of assistant principals that may be useful for further research including problem-solving, goal-setting, needs assessment, program evaluation, policy analysis, and staff development (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

### Population and Sample

The target population in this study was assistant principals in a large suburban school district in Virginia during the 2011-2012 school year, the principals with whom these assistant principals served, and the teachers who worked with these assistant principals. The targeted school district was comprised of 60 comprehensive elementary (grades K-5), middle (grades 6-8), and high schools (grades 9-12). Two alternative high schools were excluded from this study because the student populations of these schools differed significantly from the other comprehensive high schools in the division. The unit of analysis was assistant principals, principals, and teachers in such schools through their responses to a self-administered electronic survey. Figure 4 illustrates the number of schools in this large urban school district as well as the number of administrators and teachers assigned to each level of school.

Figure 4

*Number of Schools, Administrators, and Teachers*

	Elementary	Middle	High	Total
No. Schools	38	12	10	60
No. Assistant Principals	38	25	30	93
No. Principals	38	12	10	60
No. Teachers	1444	779	1109	3322

One hundred percent of assistant principals, principals, and teachers in the school district were asked to participate in the survey. Assistant principals in the selected school division were asked to complete the survey regarding their self-perceptions of the frequency with which they practiced instructional leadership during the current school year. Principals were asked to complete the survey regarding their perceptions of instructional leadership provided by their assistant principals during the current school year. If principals expected all of their assistant principals to provide instructional leadership, they were asked to respond to the survey questions according to their perceptions of what they all do; if principals delegated responsibility for instructional leadership only to particular assistant principals, they were asked to respond to the survey questions based on their perceptions of what these particular assistant principals do. Teachers in the selected school division were asked to complete the survey according to their perceptions of the frequency with which instructional leadership was practiced during the current school year by the assistant principal with whom they worked; in the event a teacher worked with more than one assistant principal, the teacher completed the survey based on the perceived instructional leadership behaviors of the assistant principal with whom they most closely worked. Accordingly, surveys were sent to 93 assistant principals, 60 principals, and 3332 teachers. Response rates are depicted in Table 1 that reports the total number of assistant principals, principals, and teachers in the district (*N*) by school level as well as the number of those that responded to the survey (*n*).

Table 1

*Response Rates*

	Assistant Principals			Principals			Teachers		
	N	n	%	N	n	%	N	n	%
Elementary Schools	38	21	55	38	14	37	1444	625	43
Middle Schools	25	25	100	12	10	83	779	342	44
High Schools	30	29	97	10	7	70	1109	344	31
Total	93	75	81	60	31	52	3332	1311	39

One hundred percent of assistant principals, principals, and teachers (N = 3,332) were invited to participate in this study. Of the total population of assistant principals (N=93), 75 or 81% responded to at least part of the survey including 21 from elementary schools, 25 from middle schools, and 29 from high schools. Assistant principal participation ranged from 100% in middle schools to 55% in elementary schools. Of the total population of principals in the school district (N=60), 31 or 52% responded to at least part of the survey including 14 from elementary schools, 10 from middle schools, and 7 from high schools. Principal participation ranged from 83% in middle schools to 37% in elementary schools. Of the total population of teachers (N=3,332), 1,311 or 39% responded to at least part of the survey including 625 from elementary schools, 342 from middle schools, and 344 from high schools. Teacher participation ranged from 44% in middle schools to 31% in high schools.

Because response rates were low for principals (52%) and teachers (39%), nonresponse bias analysis was conducted. The purpose of this nonresponse bias analysis was to determine the extent to which principals and teachers who were unable or unwilling to reply to the original survey have opinions or attitudes about assistant principal instructional leadership that are different from those who responded to a second administration of the survey (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003).

### **Nonresponse Bias Analysis**

Principals and teachers were asked to complete a second administration of the appropriate version of the survey if they had not done so when the survey was originally distributed. Five important questions from the survey were selected by the researcher in order to make comparisons for further analysis.

#### *Principal Nonresponse Bias Analysis*

Seven principals responded to the second administration of the survey. Of the five questions selected for further analysis, the highest mean reply from principals who responded to the original survey was to the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis?” ( $M = 3.69$ ). The highest mean response from principals answering the new administration of the survey was to the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?” ( $M = 2.86$ ). The question, “To what extent does your assistant principal ensure tardy or absent students make up lost instructional time?”

received the lowest means scores from both original and new principal respondents ( $M_{\text{original}} = 1.82$ ,  $M_{\text{new}} = 1.57$ ). Overall, principals taking the new administration of the survey gave lower mean scores for all five of the questions in the nonresponse bias analysis compared to principals who responded to the original survey. Descriptive statistics to compare principals' original and new survey results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Principals: Original v. New Administration of Survey*

To what extent does your assistant principal...	<i>n</i>	M	SD	SEM
Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis?				
Original	29	3.69	0.604	0.11
New	7	2.71	0.488	0.18
Meet individually with teachers to discuss student academic progress?				
Original	28	3.21	0.917	.017
New	7	2.57	1.397	0.53
Ensure tardy or absent students make up lost instructional time?				
Original	28	1.82	1.588	0.30
New	7	1.57	1.718	.065
Attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?				
Original	28	3.46	0.693	0.13

	New	7	2.86	0.690	0.26
Support teacher requests for in-service opportunities that are directly related to the school's academic goals?					
	Original	27	3.04	0.980	0.19
	New	7	2.00	0.816	0.31

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Independent samples *t*-tests were administered to determine if there were statistically significant differences between responses of principals who answered the original survey and those who responded to the new administration. Data from the *t*-test analysis indicated that there were statistically significant differences in mean scores of principals. Results of the independent samples *t*-Tests of principals are shown in Table 3.

For the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis?” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = 3.96$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) for principals who answered the original survey ( $M = 3.69$ ) and those who responded to the new administration of the survey ( $M = 2.71$ ). Therefore, principals who took the original survey are statistically significantly more likely to rate assistant principals higher regarding the frequency with which they conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis than are principals who took the new administration of the survey. Further, Cohen’s effect size value ( $d = 1.8$ ) suggests a very large practical significance (McMillan, 2004).

For the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = 2.08$ ,  $p = 0.046$ ) for principals who answered the original survey ( $M = 3.46$ ) and those who responded to the new administration of the survey ( $M = 2.86$ ). Therefore, principals who took the original survey are statistically significantly more likely to rate assistant principals higher regarding the frequency with which they attend or participate in co- or extra-curricular activities than are principals who took the new administration of the survey. Further, Cohen’s effect size value ( $d = 0.9$ ) suggests a large practical significance (McMillan, 2004).

For the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal support teacher requests for in-service opportunities that are directly related to the school's academic goals?” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = 2.57$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) for principals who answered the original survey ( $M = 3.04$ ) and those who responded to the new administration of the survey ( $M = 2.00$ ). Therefore, principals who took the original survey are statistically significantly more likely to rate assistant principals higher regarding the frequency with which they support teacher requests for professional development opportunities than are principals who took the new administration of the survey. Further, Cohen’s effect size value ( $d = 1.2$ ) suggests a very large practical significance (McMillan, 2004).



Table 3

*Independent Samples t-Test of Principal Nonresponse Bias*

To what extent does your assistant principal...	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis?	34	3.96	*0.00	1.8
Meet individually with teachers to discuss student academic progress?	33	1.49	0.15	0.6
Ensure tardy or absent students make up lost instructional time?	33	0.37	0.72	0.2
Attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?	33	2.08	*0.046	0.9
Support teacher requests for in-service opportunities that are directly related to the school's academic goals?	32	2.57	*0.02	1.2

\* $p < 0.05$ *Teacher Nonresponse Bias Analysis*

Teacher responses were similarly subjected to nonresponse bias analysis. Twenty-one teachers responded to at least part of the second administration of the survey. Of the five questions selected for further analysis, the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?” received the highest means scores from both original and new teacher respondents ( $M_{\text{original}} = 2.85$ ,  $M_{\text{new}} = 3.56$ ). The question, “To what extent does your assistant principal ensure tardy or absent students make up lost instructional time?” received the lowest means scores from both original and new teacher respondents ( $M_{\text{original}} = 1.72$ ,  $M_{\text{new}} = 2.67$ ). Overall,

teachers taking the new administration of the survey gave higher mean scores for all five of the questions in the nonresponse bias analysis compared to teachers who responded to the original survey. Descriptive statistics to compare teachers' original and new survey results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Teachers: Original v. New Administration of Survey*

To what extent does your assistant principal...	<i>n</i>	M	SD	SEM
Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis?				
Original	983	2.24	1.143	0.04
New	21	2.81	0.750	0.16
Meet individually with teachers to discuss student academic progress?				
Original	848	2.06	1.178	0.40
New	18	2.72	0.895	0.21
Ensure tardy or absent students make up lost instructional time?				
Original	836	1.72	1.294	0.05
New	18	2.67	1.138	0.27
Attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?				
Original	827	2.85	1.052	0.04
New	18	3.56	0.511	0.12

Support teacher requests for in-service opportunities that are directly related to the school's academic goals?

Original	797	2.31	1.125	0.04
New	17	2.88	0.600	0.15

Independent samples *t*-tests were administered to determine if there were statistically significant differences between responses of teachers who answered the original survey and those who responded to the new administration. Data from the *t*-test analysis indicated that there were statistically significant differences in mean scores of teachers. Results of the independent samples *t*-tests of principals are shown in Table 5.

For the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis?” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = -3.39$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) for teachers who answered the original survey ( $M = 2.24$ ) and those who responded to the new administration of the survey ( $M = 2.81$ ). Therefore, teachers who took the new administration of the survey are statistically significantly more likely to rate assistant principals higher regarding the frequency with which they conduct informal observations in classrooms than are teachers who took the original iteration of the survey. Further, Cohen’s effect size value ( $d = 0.6$ ) suggests a moderate practical significance (McMillan, 2004).

For the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal meet individually with teachers to discuss student academic progress?” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = -2.35$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ) for teachers who answered the original survey ( $M = 2.06$ ) and those who responded to the new administration of the survey ( $M = 2.72$ ). Therefore, teachers who took the new administration of the survey are statistically significantly more likely to rate assistant principals higher regarding the frequency with which they meet individually with teachers to discuss student academic progress than are teachers who took the original survey. Further, Cohen’s effect size value ( $d = 0.6$ ) suggests a moderate practical significance (McMillan, 2004).

For the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal ensure tardy or absent students make up lost instructional time?” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = -3.08$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) for teachers who answered the original survey ( $M = 1.72$ ) and those who responded to the new administration of the survey ( $M = 2.67$ ). Therefore, teachers who took the new administration of the survey are statistically significantly more likely to rate assistant principals higher regarding the frequency with which they ensure that tardy or absent students make up lost instructional time than are teachers who took the original survey. Further, Cohen’s effect size value ( $d = 0.8$ ) suggests a large practical significance (McMillan, 2004).

For the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = -5.56$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) for teachers who answered the original survey ( $M = 2.85$ ) and those who responded to the new administration of the survey ( $M = 3.56$ ). Therefore, teachers who took the new administration of the survey are statistically significantly more likely to rate assistant principals higher regarding the frequency with which they attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities than are teachers who took the original iteration of the survey. Further, Cohen’s effect size value ( $d = 0.9$ ) suggests a large practical significance (McMillan, 2004).

For the question, “To what extent does your assistant principal support teacher requests for in-service opportunities that are directly related to the school's academic goals?” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = -3.82$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) for teachers who answered the original survey ( $M = 2.31$ ) and those who responded to the new administration of the survey ( $M = 2.88$ ). Therefore, teachers who took the new administration of the survey are statistically significantly more likely to rate assistant principals higher regarding the frequency with which they support teacher requests for professional development opportunities than are teachers who took the original iteration of the survey. Further, Cohen’s effect size value ( $d = 0.6$ ) suggests a moderate practical significance (McMillan, 2004).

Table 5

*Independent Samples t-Test of Teacher Nonresponse Bias*

To what extent does your assistant principal...	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis?	1002	-3.39	*0.00	-0.6
Meet individually with teachers to discuss student academic progress?	864	-2.35	*0.02	-0.6
Ensure tardy or absent students make up lost instructional time?	852	-3.08	*0.00	-0.8
Attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?	843	-5.56	*0.00	-0.9
Support teacher requests for in-service opportunities that are directly related to the school's academic goals?	812	-3.82	*0.00	-0.6
* $p < 0.05$				

In summary, results of nonresponse bias analysis of principal and teacher responses indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices based on whether the responders took the original survey or the new administration of the survey. For principals, respondents who took the original administration of the survey rated assistant principals higher than those who took the new administration of the survey. Statistically significant differences in mean scores were noted for three of the items used to identify nonresponse bias including the extent to which assistant principals conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis, attend or participate in co- or extra-curricular activities, and support teacher

requests for professional development that are related directly to the school's academic goals. For teachers, the opposite was found to be true – respondents who took the new administration of the survey rated assistant principals higher than those who took the original survey. Statistically significant differences in mean scores were noted for all of the items used to identify nonresponse bias. That the responses from principals and teachers who took the new administration of the survey were different from those who took the original survey indicates a possible limitation; it is possible that the principals who responded to the survey were those whose assistant principals were more involved in instructional leadership, while the teachers who responded worked with assistant principals who were less involved. Nevertheless, this nonresponse bias jeopardizes the accuracy of conclusions that can be derived from the study and further limits the ability to generalize the results about instructional leadership to a larger population of assistant principals.

### **Procedures**

The sample of assistant principals, principals, and teachers was contacted via email. Each member in the sample was invited to participate in the study and provided with a URL link to the survey with each respectively being linked to the correct version of the survey according to the role group. Participants were assured of the anonymity of their responses. Participants were given a two-week window of time to respond to the

survey with a follow-up reminder after one week. One final email reminder was sent at the end of the two-week window to participate.

This study followed design principles for email surveys as suggested by Dillman (2007) in order to reduce potential errors related to the use of Internet-based surveys. For example, a multiple contact strategy was used very similar to that suggested for use in traditional mail surveys. Accordingly, a prenotice email was sent to each person in the sample in order to explain the purpose of the approaching survey as well as to create a positive impression of the value of the survey so that the recipient would be less likely to delete the email when it arrived. The prenotice was followed within several days by a brief cover letter that included an electronic link to an *Inquisite* website enabling recipients to anonymously complete the appropriate version of the survey. A follow-up email was delivered within one week of sending the cover letter and link to the survey; this follow-up email thanked those who completed the survey, encouraged those who did not complete the survey to do so, and included a replacement for those who did not complete the survey in case the original was deleted.

Each email was sent as a Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) to each assistant principal, principal, and teacher with the general title, “Assistant Principal Instructional Leadership Behavior Survey.” The BCC method was used because the kind of message that is most likely to get a response is one that appears to be individually sent (Dillman, 2007). Further, confidentiality of recipients was protected because the BCC method did not reveal each recipient’s email address to all other recipients.



All respondents voluntarily completed the survey electronically as indicated in the directions. The responses were downloaded by the researcher for descriptive and statistical analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, in addition to comparing descriptive statistics, the use of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), independent-samples *t*-tests, and correlations were required in order to analyze the data collected. If statistically significant mean differences were determined, and if  $\eta^2$  and Cohen's *d* analyses established that practical significance also existed, then post hoc comparisons were administered.

All subscales of instructional leadership behavior were subjected to exploratory factor analysis to ensure that the subscales were valid for this population. Because only one form of this instrument was given once to each individual responding to the survey, and because there were no right or wrong answers on this instrument, the Cronbach alpha method was planned to determine internal consistency of the scores reported for each sub-scale of instructional leadership behavior.

Research Question 1 – *What are the perceptions of assistant principals regarding their instructional leadership practices?*

Research Question 2 – *What are principal perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?*

Research Question 3 – *What are teacher perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?*

To investigate these three questions, group means of the eleven sub-scales of assistant principal instructional leadership behaviors were compared. Effect size and standard error were computed. Because response rates were low for principals (52%) and teachers (39%), nonresponse bias analysis was also conducted.

Research Question 4 – *Are there differences in perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders by school level, gender, and role of the rater?*

To analyze the portion of this question relating to school level required a 1 x 3 ANOVA because the lone independent variable had three levels (elementary, middle, and high school). Effect size for school level was calculated using  $\eta^2$  analysis because the independent variable had more than two levels. To answer the portion of this question pertaining to gender required an independent samples *t*-test. Effect size for gender was calculated using Cohen's *d* because only two groups were being compared. To answer the portion of this question concerning role of the rater required a 1 x 3 ANOVA because the single independent variable had three levels (assistant principal, principal, and teacher). Effect size for school level was calculated using  $\eta^2$  analysis because the independent variable had more than two levels.

Research Question 5 – *Does a relationship exist between experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools?*

To analyze this question, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between years of experience/length of service as an assistant principal and frequency of instructional leadership behaviors as reported within each subscale of instructional leadership.

### **Researcher Perspective**

It is possible that aspects of my background led to unintended bias as this project progressed. Accordingly, I want readers to be aware of possible bias so as not to limit results. I am an assistant principal with 15 years of service in the position, 4 at the high school level and 11 at the middle school level. Earlier in my career as a school administrator, my responsibilities focused primarily on the managerial aspects of the job; although I was tasked with *some* instructional leadership assignments, most of my time was spent with duties such as student discipline and supervision. As I gained experience as an assistant principal, I took advantage as often as possible of professional development opportunities related to instructional leadership – and continue to do so. Accordingly, I actively seek out chances to practice instructional leadership in my school and at the district level, and I believe that I practice as much (if not more) instructional leadership as most building principals. However, I do not necessarily feel that my

experience is typical. Disclosure of my background is made because questions I ask and conclusions I draw related to this research project may be unintentionally biased.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Findings**

This study examined the degree to which the role of the assistant principal is perceived to include instructional leadership behaviors. Specifically, this study compared the perceptions of elementary, middle, and high school assistant principals with those of principals and teachers. Research questions were developed in order to analyze these perceptions. Additional open-ended questions asked survey participants to elaborate on the types of activities that assistant principals typically spend the majority of the work day performing, what prevents assistant principals from spending more time on instructional leadership activities, types of professional development activities that would better prepare assistant principals to provide instructional leadership, and the extent to which experience as an assistant principal prepares these school administrators for the instructional leadership role of the principal. The specific research questions for this study included:

1. What are the perceptions of assistant principals regarding their instructional leadership practices?
2. What are principal perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?
3. What are teacher perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?
4. Are there differences in perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders by school level, gender, and role of the rater?

5. Does a relationship exist between experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools?

### **Internal Consistency**

Internal consistency for all items within each subscale of assistant principal instructional leadership behavior was examined using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficients for all eleven subscales were in the acceptable range (0.80 or above), while alphas for seven of the subscales were excellent (0.90 or above) (McMillian, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Reliability coefficients ranged from a high of 0.95 (framing the school's goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, and coordinating the curriculum) to a low of 0.84 (protecting instructional time). Additionally, the internal consistency coefficients for this study were consistent and compared favorably with the internal consistency coefficients from Hallinger's (1983) original study. Table 6 represents the internal consistency estimates of reliability.

Table 6

#### *Reliability Scores for Subscales of Instructional Leadership Behaviors*

Domains of Instructional Leadership	N	Items	Alpha	Hallinger's Alpha (1983)
Framing the school's goals	1215	5	0.95	0.89
Communicating the school's goals	1167	6	0.92	0.89

Supervising and evaluating instruction	1080	11	0.95	0.90
Coordinating the curriculum	981	7	0.95	0.90
Monitoring student progress	938	8	0.93	0.90
Protecting instructional time	926	5	0.84	0.84
Maintaining high visibility	916	5	0.85	0.81
Providing incentives for teachers	912	4	0.90	0.78
Promoting professional development	878	10	0.93	0.86
Developing and enforcing academic standards	867	5	0.88	0.83
Providing incentives for learning	864	4	0.87	0.87

### Research Questions 1, 2, and 3

Research questions one, two, and three examined the perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices from the perspectives of assistant principals, principals, and teachers. Participants responded to 70 behavioral statements that described job practices and behaviors of assistant principals relating to instructional leadership as measured by the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger, 1983); the assessment instrument was adapted to study the instructional leadership behaviors of *assistant* principals.

Regarding Research Question 1, means for assistant principal responses ranged from a high of 3.21 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to a low of 2.33 (promoting professional development). Means for assistant principals' self-perceptions did

not rate in the “almost always” range for any of the subscales, and assistant principals only rated themselves in the “frequently” range for three subscales (framing the school’s goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, and developing and enforcing academic standards). Assistant principals rated themselves in the “sometimes” range for the remaining eight subscales. Table 7 summarizes the descriptive statistics of self-perceptions of assistant principals regarding their instructional leadership practices.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics of Assistant Principals’ Self-Perceptions of their Instructional Leadership*

Domains of Instructional Leadership	<i>n</i>	Assistant Principal		
		M	SD	SEM
Framing the school’s goals	69	3.00	0.908	0.11
Communicating the school’s goals	69	2.47	0.882	0.11
Supervising and evaluating instruction	68	3.11	0.514	0.06
Coordinating the curriculum	66	2.47	0.856	0.11
Monitoring student progress	62	2.47	0.910	0.12
Protecting instructional time	62	2.65	0.783	0.10
Maintaining high visibility	61	2.73	0.667	0.09
Providing teacher incentives	61	2.59	0.865	0.11
Promoting professional development	60	2.33	0.772	0.10
Developing and enforcing academic standards	60	3.21	0.844	0.11
Providing incentives for learning	60	2.57	1.046	0.14



Average for Assistant Principals	2.69	0.822	0.10
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Principals gave assistant principals the highest ratings for instructional leadership. Regarding Research Question 2, average responses for principals ranged from 3.59 (framing the school’s goals) to 2.54 (protecting instructional time). The subscales of “promoting professional development” ( $M = 2.57$ ) and “providing incentives for learning” ( $M = 2.61$ ) received similar low average responses from principals. Principals rated assistant principal instructional leadership in the “frequently” range for four subscales and in the “sometimes” range for the remaining seven subscales. Neither assistant principals nor principals rated assistant principals’ instructional leadership in the “seldom” or “almost never” range for any subscales of behaviors. Table 8 summarizes the descriptive statistics of perceptions of principals regarding the instructional leadership practices of assistant principals.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics of Principals' Perceptions of Assistant Principal Instructional Leadership*

Domains of Instructional Leadership	<i>n</i>	Principal		
		M	SD	SEM
Framing the school's goals	30	3.59	0.516	0.09
Communicating the school's goals	30	2.91	0.673	0.12
Supervising and evaluating instruction	29	3.49	0.459	0.09
Coordinating the curriculum	28	3.25	0.592	0.11
Monitoring student progress	28	2.88	0.773	0.15
Protecting instructional time	28	2.54	0.825	0.16
Maintaining high visibility	28	2.82	0.592	0.11
Providing teacher incentives	28	2.81	0.815	0.15
Promoting professional development	27	2.57	0.816	0.16
Developing and enforcing academic standards	27	3.18	0.963	0.19
Providing incentives for learning	27	2.61	1.154	0.22
Average for Principals		2.97	0.743	0.14

As in Hallinger's original PIMRS survey (1983), teachers gave the lowest average ratings for assistant principals' instructional leadership. Regarding Research Question 3, teacher means ranged from 2.69 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to 1.89 (maintaining high visibility). The highest ratings from teachers, achieved in eight of the eleven subscales, were only in the "sometimes" range. Teachers rated assistant principals

in the “seldom” range for the remaining three subscales. None of the rater groups reported means in the “almost always” or “almost never” categories. Table 9 summarizes the descriptive statistics of perceptions of teachers regarding the instructional leadership practices of assistant principals.

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics of Teachers’ Perceptions of Assistant Principal Instructional Leadership*

Domains of Instructional Leadership	<i>n</i>	Teacher		SEM
		M	SD	
Framing the school’s goals	1116	2.58	1.020	0.03
Communicating the school’s goals	1068	2.26	1.003	0.03
supervising and evaluating instruction	983	2.47	0.938	0.03
Coordinating the curriculum	887	2.33	1.032	0.04
Monitoring student progress	848	2.19	1.044	0.04
Protecting instructional time	836	2.07	0.987	0.03
Maintaining high visibility	827	1.89	0.928	0.03
Providing teacher incentives	823	1.97	1.127	0.04
Promoting professional development	797	1.96	0.936	0.03
Developing and enforcing academic standards	780	2.69	0.975	0.04
Providing incentives for learning	777	2.16	1.075	0.04
Average for Teachers		2.23	1.006	0.03

In summary, assistant principal mean responses to the survey questions ranged from a high of 3.21 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to a low of 2.33 (promoting professional development). The average of all mean scores for the eleven subscales of instructional leadership given by assistant principals was 2.69 – a low “frequently” score on a four-point scoring scale. Mean scores from principals regarding the instructional leadership behavior of assistant principals ranged from 3.59 (framing the school’s goals) to 2.54 (protecting instructional time). The principals’ average of all mean scores for the eleven subscales of instructional leadership was 2.97 – solidly in the “frequently” range and the highest given by any of the three role groups. Teacher mean responses ranged from 2.69 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to 1.89 (maintaining high visibility). The average of all mean scores given by teachers was 2.23 – solidly in the “sometimes” range on a four-point scoring scale. Overall, regarding the instructional leadership practices of assistant principals, teachers gave the lowest scores of the three role groups including the lowest seven mean subscale scores among all role groups.

#### **Research Question 4**

The fourth research question explored whether school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater affected perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders. Accordingly, there were three pertinent segments of this research question.

## **School Level**

A 1 X 3 ANOVA was used to analyze the portion of this question pertaining to school level. Specifically, the eleven subscales of instructional leadership were analyzed to determine if assistant principals' instructional leadership was rated differently based upon the level of school (elementary school, middle school, or high school) to which they were assigned.

Means for elementary schools' ratings of assistant principal instructional leadership ranged from a high of 2.80 (framing the school's goals) and 2.72 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to a low of 1.20 (maintaining high visibility). The highest average responses for middle schools were in the subscale of developing and enforcing academic standards ( $M = 2.74$ ), while the lowest average responses were in the category of monitoring student progress ( $M = 1.85$ ), promoting professional development ( $M = 1.87$ ), and protecting instructional time ( $M = 1.88$ ). For high schools, mean ratings for assistant principal instructional leadership ranged from a high of 2.78 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to a low of 1.20 (promoting professional development). "Developing and enforcing academic standards" rated among the highest categories for all three levels of schools. Both middle schools and high schools rated assistant principals the lowest in the category of "promoting professional development." Table 10 summarizes the descriptive statistics pertaining to perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership based on school level.

Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics for School Level*

Domains of Instructional Leadership	Level	<i>n</i>	M	SD	SEM
Framing the school's goals	Elementary	575	2.80	0.994	0.04
	Middle	322	2.47	1.058	0.06
	High	318	2.50	0.983	0.06
Communicating the school's goals	Elementary	549	2.40	0.987	0.04
	Middle	313	2.19	1.029	0.06
	High	305	2.20	0.956	0.06
Supervising and evaluating instruction	Elementary	505	2.60	0.956	0.04
	Middle	296	2.42	0.975	0.06
	High	279	2.55	0.834	0.05
Coordinating the curriculum	Elementary	452	2.55	1.004	0.05
	Middle	276	2.18	1.046	0.06
	High	253	2.23	0.976	0.06
Monitoring student progress	Elementary	432	2.52	0.960	0.05
	Middle	262	1.85	1.023	0.06
	High	244	2.12	1.033	0.07
Protecting instructional time	Elementary	428	2.22	0.943	0.05
	Middle	259	1.88	0.958	0.06
	High	239	2.23	1.036	0.07
Maintaining high visibility	Elementary	424	1.20	0.991	0.05

	Middle	255	1.98	0.904	0.06
	High	237	1.93	0.885	0.06
Providing teacher incentives	Elementary	423	2.04	1.173	0.06
	Middle	254	1.96	1.057	0.07
	High	235	2.12	1.093	0.07
Promoting professional development	Elementary	413	2.10	0.944	0.05
	Middle	247	1.87	0.882	0.06
	High	224	1.20	0.945	0.06
Developing and enforcing academic standards	Elementary	400	2.72	0.975	0.05
	Middle	243	2.74	0.978	0.06
	High	224	2.78	0.984	0.07
Providing incentives for learning	Elementary	398	2.30	1.074	0.05
	Middle	243	2.12	1.065	0.07
	High	223	2.12	1.103	0.07
Averages for School Level	Elementary		2.31	1.000	0.05
	Middle		2.15	0.998	0.06
	High		2.18	0.984	0.06

Several statistically significant differences were found when computing one-way analysis of variance to investigate perceived differences based on school level. These data are displayed in Table 11. For the subscale of instructional leadership behavior labeled

“framing the school’s goals,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 1212) = 14.86, p = 0.00$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by school level resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.024. Therefore, although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a meaningful difference because only 2.4% of the variance was attributed to school level; consequently, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “communicating the school’s goals,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 1164) = 6.09, p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by school level, however, resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.010. Therefore, although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since school level accounted for only 1.0% of the variance; consequently, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “supervising and evaluating instruction,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 1077) = 3.75, p = 0.02$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by school level resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.007. Therefore, although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a meaningful difference because only 0.7% of the variance was attributed to school level; consequently, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “coordinating the curriculum,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 978) = 14.28, p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by school level, however, resulted in an



eta<sup>2</sup> of 0.028. Therefore, although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since school level accounted for only 2.8% of the variance; consequently, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “monitoring student progress,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 935) = 38.52, p = 0.00$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by school level resulted in an eta<sup>2</sup> of 0.076. Therefore, although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a meaningful difference because only 7.6% of the variance was attributed to school level; consequently, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “protecting instructional time,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 923) = 11.46, p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by school level, however, resulted in an eta<sup>2</sup> of 0.024. Therefore, although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since school level accounted for only 2.4% of the variance; consequently, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “promoting professional development,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 881) = 4.82, p = 0.01$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by school level resulted in an eta<sup>2</sup> of 0.011. Therefore, although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a meaningful difference because only 1.1% of the variance was attributed to school level; consequently, post hoc tests were not conducted.

Table 11

*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Perceived Differences Based on School Level*

Domains of Instructional Leadership		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Framing the school's goals	Between Groups	2	14.86	*0.00	0.024
	Within Groups	1212			
	Total	1214			
Communicating the school's goals	Between Groups	2	6.09	*0.00	0.010
	Within Groups	1164			
	Total	1166			
Supervising and evaluating instruction	Between Groups	2	3.75	*0.02	0.007
	Within Groups	1077			
	Total	1079			
Coordinating the curriculum	Between Groups	2	14.28	*0.00	0.028
	Within Groups	978			
	Total	980			
Monitoring student progress	Between Groups	2	38.52	*0.00	0.076
	Within Groups	935			
	Total	937			
Protecting instructional time	Between Groups	2	11.46	*0.00	0.024
	Within Groups	923			
	Total	925			

Maintaining high visibility	Between Groups	2	0.35	0.70	0.001
	Within Groups	913			
	Total	915			
Providing teacher incentives	Between Groups	2	1.23	0.29	0.003
	Within Groups	909			
	Total	911			
Promoting professional development	Between Groups	2	4.82	*0.01	0.011
	Within Groups	881			
	Total	883			
Developing and enforcing academic standards	Between Groups	2	0.23	0.80	0.001
	Within Groups	864			
	Total	866			
Providing incentives for learning	Between Groups	2	3.12	0.05	0.007
	Within Groups	861			
	Total	863			

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\* $p < 0.05$

### Gender of the Assistant Principal

An independent samples  $t$ -test was used to analyze the portion of this research question related to the gender of the assistant principal. Specifically, a  $t$ -test was conducted

to determine if assistant principals were rated differently regarding their instructional leadership based upon whether they were male or female.

Male and female assistant principals received both their highest and lowest mean ratings in the same categories of instructional leadership. Of the eleven subscales of instructional leadership, both male and female assistant principals received their highest mean ratings in the category of “developing and enforcing academic standards” ( $M_{\text{male}} = 2.83$ ,  $M_{\text{female}} = 2.73$ ). Similarly, both male and female assistant principals received their lowest mean ratings in the subscales of “maintaining high visibility” ( $M_{\text{male}} = 2.13$ ,  $M_{\text{female}} = 1.95$ ) and “promoting professional development” ( $M_{\text{male}} = 2.14$ ,  $M_{\text{female}} = 1.99$ ). Table 12 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the perceived differences in assistant principal instructional leadership based on gender of the assistant principal.

Table 12

*Descriptive Statistics for Gender of the Assistant Principal*

Domains of Instructional Leadership	<i>n</i>	M	SD	SEM
Framing the school's goals				
Male	155	2.53	1.024	0.08
Female	1060	2.65	1.019	0.03
Communicating the school's goals				
Male	150	2.25	1.034	0.08
Female	1017	2.29	0.989	0.03
Supervising and evaluating instruction				
Male	136	2.63	0.924	0.08
Female	944	2.52	0.935	0.03
Coordinating the curriculum				
Male	123	2.41	1.001	0.09
Female	858	2.35	1.026	0.04
Monitoring student progress				
Male	118	2.24	1.028	0.09
Female	820	2.23	1.038	0.04
Protecting instructional time				
Male	116	2.22	0.975	0.09
Female	810	2.11	0.984	0.03
Maintaining high visibility				

	Male	115	2.13	0.927	0.09
	Female	801	1.95	0.941	0.03
Providing teacher incentives					
	Male	114	2.32	1.036	0.12
	Female	798	2.00	1.114	0.04
Promoting professional development					
	Male	112	2.14	0.906	0.09
	Female	772	1.99	0.934	0.03
Developing and enforcing academic standards					
	Male	112	2.83	0.986	0.09
	Female	755	2.73	0.976	0.04
Providing incentives for learning					
	Male	112	2.28	1.176	0.11
	Female	752	2.19	1.067	0.04
Averages for Gender	Male		2.36	1.002	0.09
	Female		2.27	1.002	0.03

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Data from the *t*-test analysis indicated that statistically significant differences in mean scores for male and female assistant principals occurred in only one of the eleven subscales of instructional leadership. In the subscale labeled “providing teacher incentives,” there was a statistically significant difference in the ratings for instructional leadership ( $t = 2.83$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) for male assistant principals ( $M = 2.32$ ) and female assistant principals ( $M = 2.00$ ). Therefore, male assistant principals are statistically significantly

more likely to participate in activities involving providing teacher incentives than are their female counterparts. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by gender of the assistant principal resulted in a Cohen's  $d$  coefficient of 0.30. Accordingly, although there was a statistically significant difference between the ratings of male and female assistant principals regarding providing teacher incentives, the importance of the difference was small (McMillan, 2004).

Differences were perceived in the remaining ten subscales between male and female assistant principals regarding their instructional leadership. However, data indicated that these differences were not statistically significant. Table 13 summarizes the results of  $t$ -test analysis for the perceived differences in assistant principal instructional leadership based on gender of the assistant principal.

Table 13

*Independent Samples t-Test of Perceived Differences Based on Gender of the Assistant Principal*

Domains of Instructional Leadership	$df$	$t$	$p$	$d$
Framing the school's goals	1213	-1.35	0.18	-0.1
Communicating the school's goals	1165	-0.48	0.63	-0.0
Supervising and evaluating instruction	1078	1.29	0.20	0.1
Coordinating the curriculum	979	0.59	0.55	0.1
Monitoring student progress	936	0.08	0.93	0.0
Protecting instructional time	924	1.04	0.30	0.1

Maintaining high visibility	914	1.91	0.06	0.2
Providing teacher incentives	910	2.83	*0.01	0.3
Promoting professional development	882	1.58	0.12	0.2
Developing and enforcing academic standards	865	0.99	0.32	0.1
Providing incentives for learning	862	0.83	0.41	0.1

\* $p < 0.05$

### **Role of the Rater**

A 1 X 3 ANOVA was used to analyze the portion of this question regarding role of the rater. Specifically, the eleven subscales of instructional leadership were analyzed to investigate the degree to which assistant principals' instructional leadership ratings varied according to the role of the rater (assistant principal, principal, and teacher). Descriptive statistics pertaining to perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders based on role of the rater (assistant principal self-perceptions, principal perceptions, and teacher perceptions) are displayed in Tables 7, 8, and 9. More pertinent to this part of Research Question 4, the results of the one-way ANOVA comparing the means of these three role groups are shown in Table 14.



Table 14

*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Perceived Differences Based on Role of the Rater*

Domains of Instructional Leadership		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Framing the school's goals	Between Groups	2	19.71	*0.00	0.032
	Within Groups	1212			
	Total	1214			
Communicating the school's goals	Between Groups	2	7.41	*0.00	0.013
	Within Groups	1164			
	Total	1166			
Supervising and evaluating instruction	Between Groups	2	32.30	*0.00	0.057
	Within Groups	1077			
	Total	1079			
Coordinating the curriculum	Between Groups	2	11.72	*0.00	0.023
	Within Groups	978			
	Total	980			
Monitoring student progress	Between Groups	2	8.02	*0.00	0.017
	Within Groups	935			

	Total	937			
Protecting instructional time	Between Groups	2	12.87	*0.00	0.027
	Within Groups	923			
	Total	925			
Maintaining high visibility	Between Groups	2	37.14	*0.00	0.075
	Within Groups	913			
	Total	915			
Providing teacher incentives	Between Groups	2	16.12	*0.00	0.034
	Within Groups	909			
	Total	911			
Promoting professional development	Between Groups	2	9.59	*0.00	0.021
	Within Groups	881			
	Total	883			
Developing and enforcing academic standards	Between Groups	2	10.97	*0.00	0.025
	Within Groups	864			
	Total	866			
Providing incentives for learning	Between	2	5.86	*0.00	0.013

Groups	
Within Groups	861
Total	863

\* $p < 0.05$

Analysis of each subscale of assistant principal instructional leadership resulted in findings of statistically significant differences; these differences, however, were not meaningful. For the subscale labeled “framing the school’s goals,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 1212) = 19.71, p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater, however, resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.032. Although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since role of the rater accounted for only 3.2% of the variance; post hoc tests were not conducted because the variability among role of the raters was not significantly different.

For “communicating the school’s goals,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 1164) = 7.41, p = 0.00$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.013; role of the rater accounted for only 1.3% of the variance. Because this has no meaningful significance, no post hoc tests were conducted.

For “supervising and evaluating instruction,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 1077) =$

32.30,  $p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater, however, resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.057. Although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since role of the rater accounted for only 5.7% of the variance; accordingly, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “coordinating the curriculum,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 978) = 11.72, p = 0.00$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.023; role of the rater accounted for only 2.3% of the variance. Because the variability among roles of the raters was not significantly different, no post hoc tests were conducted.

For “monitoring student progress,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 935) = 8.02, p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater, however, resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.017. Although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since role of the rater accounted for only 1.7% of the variance; accordingly, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “protecting instructional time,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 923) = 12.87, p = 0.00$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.027; role of the rater accounted for only 2.7% of the variance. Because this has no meaningful significance, no post hoc tests were conducted.

For “maintaining high visibility,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 913) = 37.14, p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater, however, resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.075. Although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since role of the rater accounted for only 7.5% of the variance; accordingly, post hoc tests were not conducted.

For “providing incentives for teachers,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 909) = 16.12, p = 0.00$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.034; role of the rater accounted for only 3.4% of the variance. Because this has no meaningful significance, no post hoc tests were conducted.

For “promoting professional development,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 881) = 9.59, p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater, however, resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.021. Although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since role of the rater accounted for only 2.1% of the variance; post hoc tests were not conducted because the variability among roles of the raters was not significantly different.

For “developing and enforcing academic standards,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 864) = 10.97, p = 0.00$ ]. However, an analysis of the variance accounted for by role

of the rater resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.025; role of the rater accounted for only 2.5% of the variance. Because this has no meaningful significance, no post hoc tests were conducted.

For “providing incentives for learning,” there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived instructional leadership of the assistant principal [ $F(2, 861) = 5.86, p = 0.00$ ]. An analysis of the variance accounted for by role of the rater, however, resulted in an  $\eta^2$  of 0.013. Although there was a statistically significant difference, it was not a practical difference since role of the rater accounted for only 1.3% of the variance; accordingly, post hoc tests were not conducted.

In summary, survey results indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices based on school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater. However, tests for practical significance, specifically  $\eta^2$  and Cohen’s  $d$ , reflected that none of these statistically significant differences were meaningful. Regarding school level, statistically significant differences were identified in seven of the eleven subscales of instructional leadership; those subscales where significant differences were not identified included maintaining high visibility, providing teacher incentives, developing and enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for learning. Concerning the gender of assistant principals, a statistically significant difference was identified in the subscale of providing teacher incentives only. Regarding the role of the rater, statistically significant differences were identified in all eleven subscales of instructional leadership. Though statistically significant

differences were identified regarding school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater, no practical differences were found.

### Research Question 5

The fifth research question examined whether a relationship exists between years of experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between years of experience and frequency of instructional leadership behaviors as reported within each subscale of instructional leadership. Table 15 illustrates the results of this correlation.

Table 15

*Relationship between Years of Experience and Perceived Frequency of Assistant Principal Instructional Leadership*

Domains of Instructional Leadership	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	n
Framing the school's goals	0.01	0.64	1215
Communicating the school's goals	0.03	0.30	1167
Supervising and evaluating instruction	0.03	0.30	1080
Coordinating the curriculum	0.04	0.21	981
Monitoring student progress	0.04	0.25	938
Protecting instructional time	0.03	0.34	926

Maintaining high visibility	0.01	0.68	916
Providing teacher incentives	-0.01	0.87	912
Promoting professional development	-0.02	0.61	884
Developing and enforcing academic standards	-0.04	0.24	867
Providing incentives for learning	0.00	0.10	864

*\*p* < 0.05

According to McMillan (2004), correlations must measure between 0.10 and 0.30 to even be considered small or low relationships. Overall then, there was a negligible correlation between years of experience as an assistant principal and every one of the subscales of instructional leadership in the survey used for this dissertation; relationships failed to register even in the small or low range. The highest correlations were calculated for the subscales of “coordinating the curriculum” ( $r = 0.04$ ,  $p = 0.21$ ,  $n = 981$ ) and “developing and enforcing academic standards” ( $r = -0.04$ ,  $p = 0.10$ ,  $n = 864$ ). The lowest correlations were calculated for the subscales of “providing teacher incentives” ( $r = -0.01$ ,  $p = 0.87$ ,  $n = 912$ ) and “providing incentives for learning” ( $r = 0.00$ ,  $p = 0.10$ ,  $n = 864$ ). In summary, there was a negligible relationship between years of experience/length of service as an assistant principal and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools.



### **Open-Ended Responses**

Because this study was exploratory in design, survey participants were given an opportunity to respond to open-ended questions. Although this was not a mixed-methods design, such use of multiple sources of data proved useful in checking the legitimacy of responses to the survey, enriching the resulting description of instructional leadership in the target school division, enhancing the credibility of the study, and generally informing the debate on assistant principal instructional leadership (Hallinger, 1983; McMillan, 2004). These open-ended questions asked participants to elaborate on the types of activities that assistant principals typically spend the majority of the work day performing, what prevents assistant principals from spending more time on instructional leadership activities, the types of professional development activities that would better prepare assistant principals to provide instructional leadership, and the extent to which experience as an assistant principal prepares these school administrators for the instructional leadership role of the principal. In analyzing open-ended responses, the researcher found that some respondents did not answer the question as it was posed; therefore, some questions did not reflect 100% total responses.

## Open-Ended Question 1

### Types of activities/duties assistant principals spend the majority of the day performing

Answers provided by the respondent groups were classified into two broad categories – those activities generally pertaining to instructional leadership and those generally pertaining to managerial types of activities – as defined by literature and the PIMRS survey instrument subscales. Table 16 summarizes the percentage of responses by respondent group that fell into each category of activity.

Table 16

#### *Percentage of Activities Assistant Principals Spend the Majority of the Day Performing*

	<i>n</i>	Instructional Leadership Activities	Managerial Activities
Assistant Principals	99	44%	56%
Principals	75	55%	45%
Teachers	1296	39%	61%

*Note.* Many respondents listed multiple activities in response to this question; therefore, the *n* of responses is greater than the *n* of respondents.

Regarding activities on which assistant principals spend the majority of the day that were classified as *instructional leadership*, responses ranged from 55% given by principals to 39% given by teachers. Though the percentages of activities related to instructional leadership varied among the three respondent groups, the examples of instructional

leadership activities were very similar. Specific examples of assistant principal instructional leadership activities listed by assistant principals, principals, and teachers included: conducting walk-through and formal classroom observations; meeting with individual teachers to discuss evaluations; participating in teacher conferences; attending professional learning community meetings with teachers; recognizing students for academic achievement; attending department head meetings; participating in curriculum planning; being a visible presence in the hallways, classrooms, and around the school; and contributing to a variety of Special Education meetings (Child Study, Individualized Education Programs, eligibility).

The percentage of responses classified as *managerial* on which assistant principals spend the majority of the work day ranged from 61% given by teachers to 45% given by principals. Among all three respondent groups, student discipline issues were the most common cited. Other assistant principal managerial activities listed by assistant principals, principals, and teachers included: performing supervision duties (cafeteria supervision, bus duty, hall duty, monitoring after-school events); responding to parental concerns; paperwork; attending scheduled and unscheduled meetings; conducting fire and other emergency drills; organizing and carrying out school events (assemblies, fundraisers); and dealing with the minutia of activities related to managing the daily operations of the school.

Therefore, of the three respondent groups, principals perceived that activities on which assistant principals spend the majority of the day are classified as instructional

leadership activities. Teachers, in contrast, perceived that activities on which assistant principals spend the majority of the day are classified as managerial activities.

## **Open-Ended Question 2**

### **What prevents assistant principals from spending more time on activities directly related to instructional leadership**

When asked about what prevents assistant principals from spending more time on activities directly related to instructional leadership, the most frequent answer among all three respondent groups was the same – student discipline. Sixty-five percent of responses by assistant principals, fifty-one percent of responses by principals, and fifty-seven percent of responses by teachers indicated that activities related to discipline and student behavioral issues inhibit the ability of assistant principals to perform more activities in the domain of instructional leadership. Other activities that were cited as issues inhibiting the practice of instructional leadership included completing paperwork, student testing, supervising student events, textbook issues, and simply not having enough time. These examples of activities that prevent assistant principals from spending more time on instructional leadership closely mirror those types of managerial duties on which assistant principals spend the majority of their work day.

### **Open-Ended Question 3**

#### **Types of professional development opportunities that would better prepare assistant principals for instructional leadership**

Assistant principals, principals, and teachers were asked to suggest what types of professional development opportunities would better prepare assistant principals to provide instructional leadership in their schools. Some responses, particularly from teachers, suggested human relations and leadership deficits among assistant principals rather than specific instructional leadership needs. For example, several teachers suggested that their assistant principals would benefit from training on matters including how to communicate better, how to be a good team leader, how to promote more positive leadership, how to manage time more efficiently, how to avoid micromanaging staff members, how to be more consistent with student discipline matters, and how to be professional while being personable.

Most of the professional development suggestions from the respondent groups, however, related specifically to growth opportunities in the instructional leadership domain. Ideas included: differentiation of instruction; alternative methods for students to demonstrate mastery of curriculum; broadening knowledge in multiple subject areas; more overall knowledge of Special Education matters; how to teach and assess reading; curriculum design and alignment; formative assessment of student work; and ways to help teachers who are struggling with classroom management.

#### **Open-Ended Question 4 (for assistant principals and principals only)**

##### **The extent to which assistant principals are professionally prepared for the instructional leadership role of a building principal**

Many assistant principals (70%) responded that they are professionally well prepared for the instructional leadership role of a building principal. Assistant principals attributed this readiness to teaching experience, participation in professional development activities directly related to instructional leadership, and years of experience as an assistant principal. Several assistant principals specifically cited that opportunities to work with principals who are excellent role models and who deliberately provided them with hands-on experience as instructional leaders enhanced their readiness to assume this leadership role as a building principal. Similarly, many principals (70%) reported that their assistant principals are professionally prepared for the instructional leadership responsibilities of a building principal.

In contrast, 30% of assistant principals reported that they are not ready for the instructional leadership role of a building principal. Many cited that they simply do not yet feel that they have enough experience as an instructional leader and that they have learned much but still have more to learn. Likewise, some principals (17%) acknowledged the potential exhibited by their assistant principals as instructional leaders, but cited that they are not quite ready to assume the leadership role of the principal due to lack of experience. These principals indicated that more on-the-job learning will meet their assistant principals' preparation needs.

Other assistant principals conveyed that they have not had an opportunity to learn about instructional leadership from a principal who is competent in this domain. For example, one assistant principal wrote that “there is no instructional leadership [in my school]. We have spirit walks, pep rallies, and meals out.” A small percentage of principals (13%) stated directly that their assistant principals were not yet professionally prepared to serve as building principals.

### **Summary of the Results**

This study compared the perceptions of assistant principals with those of principals and teachers to examine the degree to which the role of the assistant principal is perceived to include instructional leadership behaviors. The instrument used to survey these perceptions was the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger, 1983) that was modified to measure perceptions of *assistant* principal instructional leadership. Cronbach’s alpha, used to measure the internal consistency for all items within each subscale of assistant principal instructional leadership, indicated that all reliability coefficients were in the acceptable range (0.80) or above, thereby comparing favorably with the internal consistency coefficients of Hallinger’s original application of this instrument.

Regarding responses to survey questions about assistant principal instructional leadership, assistant principal mean responses ranged from a high of 3.21 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to a low of 2.33 (promoting professional development).

Mean scores from principals ranged from 3.59 (framing the school's goals) to 2.54 (protecting instructional time). Teacher mean responses ranged from 2.69 (developing and enforcing academic standards) to 1.89 (maintaining high visibility). Overall, the mean scores given by principals were the highest given by any of the three role groups and those given by teachers were the lowest including the lowest seven mean subscale scores among all role groups.

Analysis of variance and *t*-test results of survey responses indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices based on school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater. However, tests for practical significance reflected that none of these statistically significant differences were meaningful; though statistically significant differences were identified regarding school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater, no practical differences were found.

Because response rates were low for principals (52%) and teachers (39%), nonresponse bias analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which principals and teachers who did not reply to the original survey have opinions or attitudes about assistant principal instructional leadership that are different from those who responded to a second administration of the survey. Results of nonresponse bias analysis indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices based on whether the responders took the original survey or the new administration of the survey. Principals who took the new administration of the survey



rated assistant principals lower than those who took the original administration of the survey. However, teachers who took the new administration of the survey rated assistant principals higher than those who took the original survey. Statistically significant differences in mean scores were noted. Therefore, the responses from principals and teachers who took the new administration of the survey were different from those who took the original survey.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to examine whether a relationship exists between years of experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools. Results indicated that there was a negligible relationship between experience and ratings of instructional leadership.

Answers to open-ended questions were analyzed. According to results, principals perceived that activities on which assistant principals spend the majority of the day are classified as instructional leadership activities whereas teachers, in contrast, perceived that activities on which assistant principals spend the majority of the day are classified as managerial activities. When asked about what prevents assistant principals from spending more time on activities directly related to instructional leadership, assistant principals, principals, and teachers alike gave the same response – student discipline. When asked to suggest professional development activities that would better prepare assistant principals to provide instructional leadership, most suggestions from the respondent groups related specifically to growth opportunities in the instructional leadership domain. Assistant

principals and principals were also asked about the extent to which assistant principals felt professionally prepared, regarding their instructional leadership, to serve as building principals. Approximately half of responding assistant principals indicated that they felt ready for the instructional leadership responsibilities of building principals, and 70% of responding principals felt that their assistant principals were prepared to be principals based on observances of their instructional leadership. Of those who responded in the negative, many felt that assistant principals only needed more experience.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter concentrates first on a summary of the research questions and findings of the study. Following a discussion of the findings is a summary of the limitations and delimitations of the study. This summary is followed by recommendations for further research on the topic. Finally, this chapter closes with a discussion of implications for the practice of instructional leadership by assistant principals.

#### **Summary**

This research study examined the degree to which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership by comparing the perceptions of assistant principals with those of principals and teachers. Research questions were generated and tested through the use of Likert-style survey questions that measured the perceived instructional leadership of assistant principals using 11 sub-scales within the dimension of instructional leadership as developed by Hallinger (1983). The instrument used to survey these perceptions was the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (Hallinger) that was modified to measure perceptions of *assistant* principal instructional leadership. Cronbach's alpha, used to measure the internal consistency for all items within each subscale of assistant principal instructional leadership, indicated that all reliability coefficients were in

the acceptable range (0.80) or above, thereby comparing favorably with the internal consistency coefficients of Hallinger's original application of this instrument.

The specific research questions examined in this study included:

1. What are the perceptions of assistant principals regarding their instructional leadership practices?
2. What are principal perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?
3. What are teacher perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders?
4. Are there differences in perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders by school level, gender, and role of the rater?
5. Does a relationship exist between experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools?

Additional open-ended questions asked survey participants to elaborate on the types of activities that assistant principals typically spend the majority of the work day performing, what prevents assistant principals from spending more time on instructional leadership activities, types of professional development activities that would better prepare assistant principals to provide instructional leadership, and the extent to which experience as an assistant principal prepares these school administrators for the instructional leadership role

of the principal. Data were analyzed by comparing means and other descriptive statistics as well as by means of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), independent-samples *t*-tests, and correlations.

## **Findings**

### **Nonresponse Bias Analysis**

Because response rates were low for principals and teachers, nonresponse bias analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which principals and teachers who did not reply to the original survey have opinions or attitudes about assistant principal instructional leadership that are different from those who responded to a second administration of the survey. Results of nonresponse bias analysis indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices based on whether the responders took the original survey or the new administration of the survey. Principals who took the new administration of the survey rated assistant principals lower than those who took the original administration of the survey. However, teachers who took the new administration of the survey rated assistant principals higher than those who took the original survey. Statistically significant differences in mean scores were noted. Therefore, the responses from principals and teachers who took the new administration of the survey were different from those who took the original survey.

The researcher concluded that statistically significant differences in mean scores between those who took the new administration of the survey and those who took the original survey occurred due to the timing of the surveys. The original survey was administered during the first week in June, a time when schools typically focus on administering end-of-year exams, Standards of Learning tests, other accountability tests, and otherwise are engaged mentally and emotionally with activities to bring the school year to a close. The new administration of the survey, taken by those who did not participate in the original administration, was administered in March. I concluded that the mental state of the respondents explains, in large part, the differences in responses. This determination is supported by comments offered by responders to the original survey on open-ended questions; several responders specifically commented that the original survey was administered during the busiest time of the year.

### **Perceptions of Assistant Principals, Principals, and Teachers**

For research questions 1, 2, and 3, the perceptions of assistant principals were compared with those of principals and teachers regarding the instructional leadership behaviors of assistant principals. Of the 11 sub-scales of instructional leadership examined by the survey, assistant principals rated themselves the highest in the categories of “developing and enforcing academic standards” and “supervising and evaluating instruction.” Principals rated assistant principals the highest in the categories of “framing the school’s goals” and “supervising and evaluating instruction.” Teachers gave assistant

principals the highest ratings in the categories of “developing and enforcing academic standards” and “framing the school’s goals.”

Assistant principals gave themselves the lowest scores in the sub-scales of “promoting professional development,” communicating the school’s goals,” “coordinating the curriculum,” and “monitoring student progress.” The lowest ratings from principals were in the categories of instructional leadership relating to “protecting instructional time,” “promoting professional development,” and “providing incentives for learning.” The lowest ratings from teachers were in the categories of “maintaining high visibility,” “promoting professional development,” and “providing teacher incentives.”

Interesting connections surfaced when perceptions of assistant principals, principals, and teachers were compared. For example, both assistant principals and principals rated “supervising and evaluating instruction” among their highest sub-scales of instructional leadership for assistant principals. Similarly, both assistant principals and teachers assessed “developing and enforcing academic standards” among their highest categories, and both principals and teachers selected “framing the school’s goals” among their highest-rated categories of assistant principal instructional leadership. The category of “promoting professional development” ranked among the lowest categories by assistant principals, principals, and teachers alike. Overall, the mean scores given by principals were the highest given by any of the three role groups and those given by teachers were the lowest including the lowest seven mean subscale scores among all role groups.

In the original study using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale instrument, Hallinger (1983) valued the appraisal of *teachers* as the primary source of ratings for data analysis in part because teachers are in close proximity to the subjects being rated and therefore have abundant opportunity to observe the instructional leadership behaviors being appraised. By extension, the opinions of teachers completing the current survey may be interpreted as more dependable than those of assistant principals and principals. Additionally, Hallinger states that self-reporting (i.e. survey results collected from assistant principals) often leads to results that are inconsistent compared to those collected from other sources. Teachers' perceptions in this study are difficult to reconcile, however, with research compiled by Kirkpatrick (2010) who reports that assistant principals are involved in an extensive number of instructional leadership practices. The fact, then, that teachers in the current study gave comparatively low ratings to assistant principals regarding the frequency of their instructional leadership practices bears consideration.

That assistant principals in this study did not perceive themselves as being involved in higher frequencies of instructional leadership differs when compared to the research of Howard-Schwind (2010) and Kirkpatrick (2010). Howard-Schwind found that assistant principals perceive that they practice instructional leadership at a high frequency, and Kirkpatrick determined that assistant principals are involved in an extensive number of instructional leadership practices. Further, the perception of principals regarding assistant principals' instructional leadership aligns with research conducted by Gaston (2005) who



found that assistant principals in Virginia participate in instructional leadership behaviors in the range of occasionally-to-often.

The perceptions of the researcher align more favorably to the results of this study than to the likes of Gaston, Howard-Schwind, and Kirkpatrick. For example, the researcher believes himself to be a strong assistant principal instructional leader, even when compared to many building principals. He feels that he is particularly adept in the subscales of supervising and evaluating instruction, maintaining high visibility, and promoting professional development. Yet when analyzing his instructional leadership *overall* using the PIMRS instrument as a guide, the researcher concludes that his instructional leadership leaves much to be desired. Particular areas of weakness include communicating the school's goals, monitoring school progress, and protecting instructional time. He recognizes that to be truly effective in all areas of instructional leadership requires professional development in these areas.

### **Differences in Perceptions by School Level, Gender of the Assistant Principal, and Role of the Rater**

Analysis of variance and *t*-test results of survey responses indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of assistant principal instructional leadership practices based on school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater. However, tests for practical significance, specifically  $\eta^2$  and Cohen's *d*, reflected that these statistically significant differences were not meaningful; though statistically

significant differences were identified regarding school level, gender of the assistant principal, and role of the rater, no practical differences were found.

These results were similar to those of Matthews (2003) and Robinson (2007). Matthews and Robinson found that factors such as school level, among others, have no significant effect on perceptions of assistant principals as instructional leaders. Unlike the current study, however, these researchers did find significant differences concerning the gender of assistant principals; specifically, Matthews and Robinson found significant differences in the perceived amount of time spent on instructional leadership according to the gender of the assistant principal. Similarly, Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson (2002) reported that female assistant principals spend more time, and are more successful, at instructional leadership tasks than their male counterparts.

### **Correlation between Experience and Assistant Principal Instructional Leadership**

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine whether a relationship exists between years of experience/length of service at the position and the frequency with which assistant principals are perceived to practice instructional leadership in their schools. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to examine this relationship. Results indicated that there was a negligible relationship between experience and ratings of instructional leadership. The results of this correlation were similar to results found in other studies. Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson (2002), Matthews

(2003), and Robinson (2007) reported that years of experience as an assistant principal does not result in more time devoted to or success at instructional leadership.

### **Analysis of Open-Ended Responses**

Answers to open-ended questions were analyzed. In response to the question about the types of activities/duties that assistant principals spend the majority of the day performing, principals perceived that such activities are classified generally as instructional leadership activities whereas teachers, in contrast, perceived that such activities are classified generally as managerial activities. Many teachers gave interesting responses to this question. For example, several teachers answered that they “really have no idea what the assistant principal does but that they would love to know.” One teacher replied that she never sees her assistant principal in the halls, while another responded that he “rarely sees [his] assistant principal at all as a presence in the building interacting with students and/or teachers.” One respondent wrote that her assistant principal is not very visible and is not present in the classrooms, staff meetings, or professional development sessions.

When asked about what prevents assistant principals from spending more time on activities directly related to instructional leadership, assistant principals, principals, and teachers alike gave the same response – student discipline. According to research by Gaston (2005), these perceptions align with the literature that characterizes assistant principals as spending the majority of their professional time on student discipline and other managerial tasks. Dowling (2007) and O’ Prey (1999) similarly report that assistant

principals spend the bulk of their time on discipline and other non-instructional responsibilities and therefore have limited opportunities to participate in instructional leadership. Celikten (1998) reported that factors that inhibit the practice of instructional leadership by assistant principals include too wide a variety of daily duties to perform and having little time to focus on curriculum-related issues due to dealing with student discipline.

In the current study, elementary school personnel reported that activities pertaining to the administration of Special Education services meaningfully prevented assistant principals from spending more time on other types of instructional leadership activities. Specific examples of such activities relating to the administration of Special Education services included attending Child Study, eligibility, and Individualized Education Program meetings. Many teachers gave interesting responses to this question. For example, several teachers reported that the *principal* prevents the assistant principal in their school from spending more time on instructional leadership activities and that the assistant principal “is often covering for our invisible principal.” Other teachers wrote that instructional leadership by their assistant principal is not practiced more frequently due to “disinterest,” “he doesn’t want to,” and that “he is lazy.” One teacher wrote that her assistant principal does not spend more time on instructional leadership matters because this administrator simply “doesn’t know instructional practices.” Additional responses indicated that assistant principals do not practice instructional leadership more frequently because they are too new to the position and need more experience.

When asked to suggest professional development activities that would better prepare assistant principals to provide instructional leadership, most suggestions from the respondent groups related specifically to growth opportunities in the instructional leadership domain. Receiving professional development related to instructional leadership was found to be very important for assistant principals who desire to become building principals. Assistant principals in Dowling's study (2007) reported that they received no leadership training relative to instructional leadership.

This open-ended question spawned interesting responses. One principal suggested that assistant principals do not need professional development, per se; rather, assistant principals would be better able to engage in instructional leadership if they had more opportunities to meet with principals in a mentoring capacity and could spend less time addressing managerial issues. Several teachers expressed that they were not interested in their assistant principals providing more instructional leadership. They stated that assistant principals are sometimes not respected as instructional leaders because they have "no credible background" in the subject areas of those teachers whom they supervise; "too many [assistant principals] come from soft disciplines (PE/Health) and find the task of making judgments on hard academics well beyond their scope." One teacher wrote that "any [professional development] would be an improvement [because my assistant principal] has no idea how to even begin providing instructional leadership. I don't think he even understands what he should be looking for when he does an observation." Of particular interest were suggestions by many teachers that assistant principals should be

required to periodically teach a class in order to better understand daily pressures on teachers, establish better relationships with students, and generally keep up to date with current instructional practices.

Assistant principals and principals were also asked about the extent to which assistant principals felt professionally prepared, regarding their instructional leadership, to serve as building principals. Seventy percent of responding assistant principals indicated that they felt ready for the instructional leadership responsibilities of building principals. Likewise, 70% of responding principals felt that their assistant principals were prepared to be principals based on observances of their instructional leadership. Of those who responded in the negative, many felt that assistant principals only needed more experience. Celikten (1998) reported that factors that enhance assistant principal instructional leadership activities include support and encouragement from principals. Wright (1994) wrote that instructional leadership is the most important competency needed by assistant principals to become successful principals, but that the managerial demands on assistant principals present few opportunities for the preparation for leadership competencies expected of building principals.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

The primary limitation to this study related to the time of year during which the data were collected. The school division where the study was conducted placed a restriction on the time the survey was allowed to be administered; specifically, the survey

was not allowed to be administered until the first week in June – a time of year when schools are engaged mentally and emotionally with activities to bring the school year to a close. Accordingly, many respondents may simply have chosen not to respond due to stresses they faced because the survey was administered at the end of the school year.

A second limitation was the collection of data. The quantitative data were collected using an anonymous electronic survey where participation was voluntary and responses were self-reported. Some respondents perhaps were not convinced of the anonymity of their responses to the survey and therefore may have chosen not to participate. Assistant principals particularly, and principals to a lesser extent, possibly viewed this study as an evaluation of their performance and therefore may have inflated their responses to the survey questions.

Another limitation of this study related to the selected survey instrument. The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale was originally developed to measure the instructional leadership of *principals*; this instrument has only recently begun to be used to measure the instructional leadership of *assistant principals*. Although the reliability coefficients for all eleven subscales of assistant principal instructional leadership were in the acceptable range (0.84 and above) and alphas for seven of the subscales were excellent (0.90 or above), and these internal consistency coefficients were consistent and compared favorably with those from Hallinger's (1983) original study, results should nevertheless be interpreted with caution. As more studies on assistant principals utilize the PIMRS instrument, this limitation will become moot.

Factor analysis was yet another limitation. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which the survey questions clustered together in the manner intended by Hallinger (1983), the creator of the survey. However, results of the factor analysis indicated that the analysis did not correspond to the survey subscales. At the 0.5 confidence level, the survey only showed one factor (at the 0.1 confidence level there were eight factors) – not the eleven factors of instructional leadership as indicated by Hallinger’s research. Accordingly, for this study, there were eleven “subscales” of instructional leadership but not eleven factors.

Results of this study were delimited due to several factors. One such delimitation was the length of the survey. Although a longer test is considered to be more reliable than a shorter one (McMillan, 2004), the length coupled with the time of year it was administered may have resulted in many respondents choosing not to participate; the resulting nonresponse bias inhibited generalizability. Further, because the entire sample of responders to the survey worked in the same school system, there is no precise way of generalizing the results of this study to a larger population of secondary assistant principals.

### **Recommendations**

A number of recommendations are suggested as a result of this study and its results. Such recommendations include those related to suggestions for continued research on this



topic as well as implications for the practice of instructional leadership for assistant principals.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

This study was purposefully designed to be exploratory in an effort to examine a research topic that has received very little empirical consideration. The results of this study represent only a first step in providing useful data on the topic of assistant principal instructional leadership. If educators truly plan to “leave no child behind,” then more consideration of assistant principal instructional leadership is warranted. Suggestions for further research on this topic include:

- *International perspective.* Scholars have begun to show interest in educational reforms throughout the world (Hallinger, 2011b). While most of my review of related research focused on literature concentrated in America, interest in school leadership has recently evolved into a global phenomenon bridging North America, Europe, and Asia (Hallinger & Huber, 2012). Comparisons can be drawn between the plethora of American studies and those that have a global focus on school leadership. For example, Muijs & Harris (2003) cite that many of the studies they reviewed equate school leadership with the role of the head teacher or headmaster; in contrast, international research focusing on other school leaders such as assistant or deputy heads is relatively scarce. Because international school leadership is now beginning to draw attention, it only follows that particular attention should be

focused on assistant principals, assistant heads, and deputy heads of schools.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the theorized paradigm shift regarding the instructional leadership role of assistant principals should be studied within the context of global realities.

- *Connections to distributed leadership.* Notions of the “heroic principal” – a charismatic leader who takes over a struggling school, establishes new goals and expectations, and then transforms an ineffective school culture into one that produces greater student achievement and improved teacher morale – are no longer relevant (if, indeed, they ever were). Evidence suggests that school leadership is a much stronger predictor of school improvement and student achievement when leadership is distributed broadly across multiple roles including assistant principals, department chairs, team leaders, and other informal school leaders (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Spillane, 2005). Even recent international studies of school leadership report that the “great man or woman” notion of school leadership is being rejected in favor of a paradigm that reflects the importance of distributed leadership (Mulford & Silins, 2003; Muijs & Harris, 2003). Additionally, Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor (2003) report that empirical evidence of the effects of distributed leadership on student achievement is not widespread. Therefore, more research is necessary regarding the instructional leadership of assistant principals within the context of the theory of distributed leadership in schools.

- *In-depth focus.* This study represents only a first step to address the scarcity of research to analyze the instructional leadership behaviors of assistant principals. While more quantitative studies of this nature are needed to explore trends across larger samples and evaluate the validity of specific programs and practices, further studies must also focus more deeply into the relationships between assistant principal instructional leadership and subjects such as: principal leadership style; the nature of teaching staffs (experience, preferred teaching styles); the implications for different role groups defining instructional leadership differently; and varying student populations (socio-economic status, ethnicity, parental support for school policies and expectations). Such research will highlight understanding of how assistant principal instructional leadership practices are affected by a variety of organizational settings. It is further recommended that observational, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies are conducted to include interviews of assistant principals and the collections of other data sources in an effort to produce more in-depth analysis, discover new perspectives, and describe practices in depth (Hallinger & Huber, 2012).
- *The power of teacher voices.* In the original study using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale instrument, Hallinger (1983) valued the appraisal of *teachers* as the primary source of ratings for data analysis. In this current study, teachers provided very powerful responses, particularly to open-ended questions. Though many responses indicated respect and appreciation for the leadership being

provided in their schools, many other responses communicated frustration and anger regarding a perceived lack of professionalism and/or knowledge of effective instructional leadership practices. This dichotomy serves as an excellent springboard for further study.

- *Effects on student achievement.* The ultimate purpose of any study of educational leadership is to positively affect student achievement. Indeed, the organizational position of the assistant principal was created for this very purpose – indirectly at first, but more recently focusing specifically on efforts to lead their school toward academic excellence. Accordingly, future studies of assistant principal instructional leadership must emphasize the extent to which such activities and behaviors affect student achievement as well as which domains of assistant principal instructional leadership have the greatest effect on student achievement.
- *Generalizability.* Consideration must be given regarding ways to generalize the findings of this and future studies. Generalizability was delimited with this study because the entire sample of responders to the survey worked in the same school system and because nonresponse bias was detected. It is recommended that future studies address the delimitations of this study. One suggestion is to utilize a larger sample. Future researchers, for instance, may consider surveying a random sample of school divisions within the state, surveying a random sample of school divisions across the country, and surveying an international sample of assistant principals, principals, and teachers.

## **Implications for Practice**

Analysis of the research problem addressed by this dissertation resulted in implications for the practice of instructional leadership by assistant principals. These implications for practice focus primarily on professional development and preparation for the principalship.

Continuous learning is a hallmark of educational professionals. Because they are in the business of educating students, educational professionals are similarly expected to participate in their own continuous learning. Indeed, such an expectation is built into an educator's recertification requirements in order to remain fully licensed. Assistant principals are likewise expected to continue to learn ways to make them better prepared to carry out their professional responsibilities. Results of this study highlighted several opportunities for assistant principals to grow as instructional leaders. At least some teachers' answers to open-ended questions indicated that they perceived their assistant principals knew very little about instructional leadership and/or appeared disinterested in improving their practice. While professional development in *all* of the domains of instructional leadership may be beneficial, it is not practical to expect the school division to address all such concerns at once; reliance on specific findings of this study may prove useful in highlighting specific areas for professional development. According to the findings, the instructional leadership subscale of "promoting professional development" ranked among the lowest categories by assistant principals, principals, and teachers alike. Other areas that received low mean scores included instructional leadership activities

related to maintaining high visibility and protecting instructional time. It is recommended that assistant principals in the sample school division take immediate advantage of professional development opportunities to address their perceived instructional leadership deficiencies in the indicated areas.

Findings of this study also resulted in implications for practice related to assistant principals' preparation for the principalship. Assistant principals are entry-level school leaders who typically aspire to become principals; the key to providing access to the principalship is the assistant principalship (Austin & Brown, 1970; Bartholomew, Melendez-Delaney, Orta, & White, 2005; Marshall, 1993; Marshall & Greenfield, 1985). According to Good (2008), assistant principals should focus on strengthening their skills as instructional leaders now because when they are named principal is not a good time to develop these skills. Ever since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), principals have been expected to lead their schools to academic excellence as instructional leaders. If assistant principals are next-in-line and, indeed, aspire to ascend to the principalship, and if it is incumbent upon principals to be instructional leaders, then it behooves assistant principals to become as adept as possible regarding these important instructional leadership skills.

Good (2008) states that the best reason why assistant principals should become strong instructional leaders is because they will then have a positive effect on teachers, which will ultimately improve student performance. Logic dictates that shifting the instructional leadership paradigm to include assistant principals will result in increased

student success (Howard-Schwind, 2010). Ultimately, students are the strongest reason to develop instructional leadership skills. Assistant principals must be professionally prepared to give students their instructional best.

## **Conclusion**

Much of the research on assistant principals concludes that these important school administrators are limited to traditional managerial and supervisory duties, chiefly those duties that principals do not want to perform. More recent studies that recognize their value as instructional leaders – including this dissertation – contend that assistant principals continue to spend considerable amounts of their work day performing managerial duties, particularly those duties pertaining to student discipline. However, interest in the assistant principalship as a research topic continues to increase, with particular focus on the assistant principal as an *instructional leader*.

Results from this study indicate that assistant principals in the sample do not spend the majority of their day carrying out instructional leadership responsibilities; nevertheless, survey results clearly indicate that they spend “some” of their day on such tasks. Specifically, the lowest overall scores in this survey – those given by teachers – indicate that assistant principals in the sample practice instructional leadership “sometimes.” That teachers, who gave the lowest overall ratings, feel on average that assistant principals practice instructional leadership “sometimes” is significant; earlier research on assistant

principals suggests very little if any time is devoted to instructional leadership, while this study indicates “sometimes” and supports the research hypothesis of a paradigm shift.

This study is important because it contributes significantly to the dearth of empirical research on assistant principals as instructional leaders and will aid future research on the topic. Noteworthy empirical data were shared. More importantly, this study addressed significant areas for further research and implications for assistant principal instructional leadership. As schools continue to search for answers regarding student achievement, this study serves as a vital step toward investigating perceptions of the valuable effects that assistant principals may have.



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## **Appendices**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Permission to Use Survey Instrument**

May 20, 2009

Butch Atkinson  
Assistant Principal  
Robious Middle School  
2701 Robious Crossing Drive  
Midlothian, VA 23113

Dear Mr. Atkinson:

As copyright holder and publisher, you have my permission as publisher to use the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)* in your doctoral research study. In using the scale, you may make unlimited copies of any of the three forms of the PIMRS.

Please note the following conditions of use:

1. This authorization extends only to the use of the PIMRS for research purposes, not for general school district use of the instrument for evaluation or staff development purposes;
2. You may adapt the instrument for your purposes as long as you are explicit about the adapted nature of the instrument's use in your abstract of the study;
3. The user will include reliability analysis in the study;
4. The user agrees to send a soft copy of the completed study to the publisher upon completion of the research.

Please be advised that a separate *permission to publish* letter, needed by UMI for publication of the instrument in your dissertation, will be sent after the publisher receives a soft copy of the completed study.

Sincerely,



Professor Philip Hallinger

7250 Golf Pointe Way  
Sarasota, FL, 34243

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Survey**

#### **Instructional Leadership of Assistant Principals – Assistant Principal Form**

## Background Information - ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FORM

Part I. Please provide the following information.

**1. What is the level of school where you currently serve as an assistant principal?**

☐

Elementary School

☐

Middle School

☐

High School

**2. What is your gender?**

☐

Male

☐

Female

**3. What is the total number of years, at the end of this school year, that you have served as an assistant principal?**

## Perceived Assistant Principal Instructional Leadership Behavior

Part II. This questionnaire is designed to provide a profile of your instructional leadership. It consists of 70 behavioral statements that might be used to describe assistant principal instructional job practices and behaviors. You are asked to consider each question in terms of your leadership during the current school year.

Read each question carefully, then respond by clicking the button for each question that best fits the specific job behavior or practice as you conducted it during the current school year. In some cases, these responses may seem awkward; use your best judgment in selecting the most appropriate response to such questions. Please select only one response for each question. Try to answer every question.

Thank you.

## FRAMING THE SCHOOL'S GOALS

To what extent do you:

**4. Participate in developing goals that seek improvement over current levels of academic performance?**

☐

Almost Always

☐

Frequently

☐

Sometimes

☐

Seldom

☐

Almost Never

**5. Play a part in framing academic goals with target dates?**

☐

Almost Always

☐

Frequently

☐

Sometimes

☐

Seldom

☐

Almost Never

**6. Contribute in framing the school's academic goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them?**

☐

Almost Always

☐

Frequently

☐

Sometimes

☐

Seldom

☐

Almost Never



**7. Use data on student academic performance when participating in developing the school's academic goals?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**8. Play a role in developing goals that are easily translated into classroom objectives by teachers?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

### COMMUNICATING THE SCHOOL'S GOALS

To what extent do you:

**9. Communicate the school's academic goals to people at school?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**10. Refer to the school's academic goals in informal settings with teachers?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**11. Discuss the school's academic goals with teachers at faculty meetings?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**12. Refer to the school's academic goals when making curricular decisions with teachers?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**13. Ensure that the school's goals are reflected in highly visible displays in the school (for example, posters or bulletin boards indicating the importance of reading or math)?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**14. Refer to the school's goals in student assemblies?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

### SUPERVISING AND EVALUATING INSTRUCTION

To what extent do you:

**15. Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis (informal observations are unscheduled, last at least five minutes, and may or may not involve written feedback or a formal conference)?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**16. Ensure that the classroom objectives of teachers are consistent with the stated goals of the school?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**17. Meet with teachers and aides to ensure that they are working toward the same objective?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**18. Review student work products when evaluating classroom instruction?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**19. Evaluate teachers on academic objectives directly related to those of the school?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**20. Point out specific strengths in teacher instructional practices in post observation conferences?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**21. Point out specific weaknesses in teacher instructional practices in post observation conferences?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**22. Note specific strengths of the teacher's instructional practices in written evaluations?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**23. Note specific weaknesses of the teacher's instructional practices in written evaluations?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**24. Note student time-on-task in feedback to teachers after classroom observations?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**25. Note specific instructional practices related to the stated classroom objectives in written evaluations?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

#### **COORDINATING THE CURRICULUM**

To what extent do you:

**26. Contribute to making decisions regarding who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**27. Participate in decisions to ensure that the school's academic goals are translated into common curricular objectives?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**28. Draw on results of school-wide testing when participating in making curricular decisions?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**29. Ensure that the objectives of special programs are coordinated with those of the regular classroom?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**30. Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers the school's curricular objectives?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**31. Assist in assessing the overlap between the school's curricular objectives and the achievement test(s) used for program evaluation?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**32. Participate actively in the review and/or selection of curricular materials?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

### MONITORING SCHOOL PROGRESS

To what extent do you:

**33. Meet individually with teachers to discuss student academic progress?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**34. Discuss the item analysis of tests with the faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses in the instructional program?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**35. Use test results to assess progress toward school goals?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**36. Distribute test results in a timely fashion?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**37. Inform teachers of the school's performance results in written form (for example, in a memo or newsletter)?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**38. Inform students of the school's performance results?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**39. Identify students whose test results indicate a need for special instruction such as remediation or enrichment?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**40. Assist in developing or finding the appropriate instructional program(s) for students whose test results indicate a need for special instruction?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**PROTECTING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME**

To what extent do you:

**41. Ensure that instructional time is not interrupted by public-address announcements?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**42. Ensure that students are not called to the office during instructional time?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**43. Ensure that truant students suffer specified consequences for missing instructional time?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**44. Ensure that tardy or truant students make up lost instructional time?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**45. Visit classrooms to see that instructional time is used for learning and practicing new skills and concepts?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**MAINTAINING HIGH VISIBILITY**

To what extent do you:

**46. Take time to talk with students and teachers during recess and breaks?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**47. Visit classrooms to discuss school issues with teachers and students?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**48. Attend or participate in co-curricular or extra-curricular activities?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**49. Cover classes for teachers until a late or substitute teacher arrives?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**50. Tutor or provide direct instruction to students?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**PROVIDING INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS**

To what extent do you:

**51. Reinforce superior performance by teachers in staff meetings, newsletters, and memos?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**52. Compliment teachers privately for their efforts and performance?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**53. Acknowledge special effort or performance by teachers in memos for their personnel files?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**54. Reward special efforts by teachers with opportunities for professional development (for example, new roles or in-service training)?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

To what extent do you:

**55. Inform teachers of opportunities for professional development?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**56. Select in-service activities that are consistent with the school's academic goals?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**57. Support teacher requests for in-service opportunities that are directly related to the school's academic goals?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**58. Distribute journal articles to teachers on a regular basis?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**59. Actively support the use of skills in the classroom that are acquired during in-service training?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**60. Ensure that instructional aides receive appropriate training to help students meet instructional objectives?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**61. Arrange for outside speakers to make presentations on instruction at faculty meetings?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**62. Provide time to meet individually with teachers to discuss instructional issues?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**63. Sit in on in-service activities concerned with instruction?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**64. Set aside time at faculty meetings for teachers to share ideas on instruction or information from new in-service activities?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

#### **DEVELOPING AND ENFORCING ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

To what extent do you:

**65. Set high standards for the percentage of students who are expected to master important instructional objectives?**

☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**66. Encourage teachers to start class on time and teach to the end of the period?**

- ☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**67. Make known what is expected of students at different grade-level assemblies?**

- ☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**68. Enforce a promotion standard requiring mastery of grade-level expectations?**

- ☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**69. Support teachers when they enforce academic policies (for example, on grading, homework, promotion, and discipline)?**

- ☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

#### PROVIDING INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING

To what extent do you:

**70. Recognize students who do superior academic work with formal rewards such as honor roll or mention in the school's newsletter?**

- ☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**71. Use assemblies to honor students for their academic work and/or behavior in class?**

- ☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

**72. Recognize superior student achievement or improvement by seeing students in the office with their work products?**

- ☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

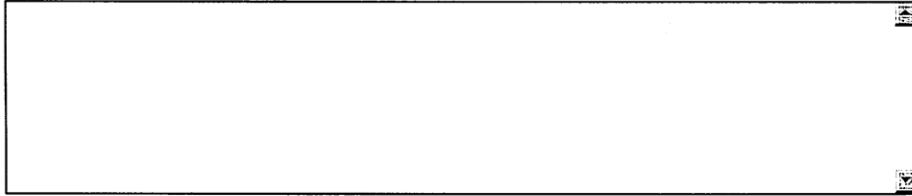
**73. Contact parents to communicate improved student performance in school?**

- ☐ Almost Always    ☐ Frequently    ☐ Sometimes    ☐ Seldom    ☐ Almost Never

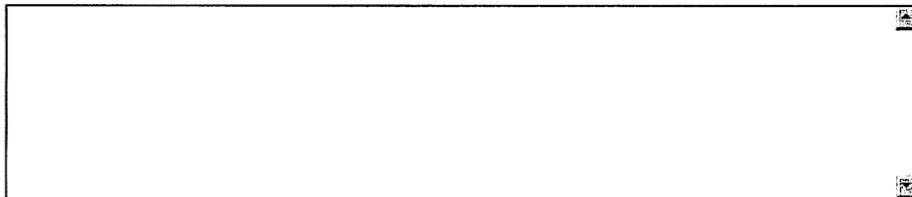
#### Free Response Questions

Part III. Please respond briefly to the following questions.

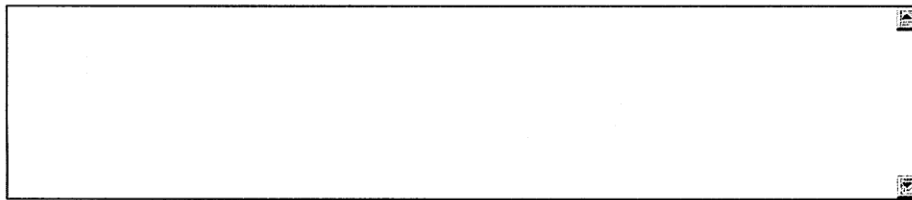
**74. What types of activities/duties do you spend the majority of your day performing?**



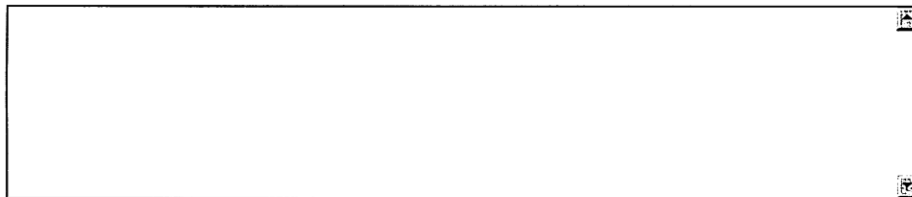
**75. What, if anything, prevents you from spending more time on activities relating directly to instructional leadership?**



**76. What types of professional development opportunities would you like in order to better prepare you to provide instructional leadership in your school?**



**77. Discuss the extent to which you feel your experience as an assistant principal has prepared you for the instructional leadership role of a building principal.**





## **APPENDIX C**

### **Permission to Publish**

Dr. Philip Hallinger  
7250 Golf Pointe Way  
Sarasota, FL 34243  
hallinger@gmail.com

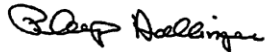
April 15, 2013

Ronald Atkinson

As copyright holder and publisher, you have my permission for Proquest/UMI to include the PIMRS scale in your dissertation which they will publish. I understand that your University may also reproduce single copies and give my assent for that purpose.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Hallinger", written in a cursive style.

Professor Philip Hallinger

## VITA

Ronald Earl (Butch) Atkinson, Jr. grew up in Victoria, Virginia with his parents, Jane and Ronnie, his brother, Bill, and his sister, Sarah Jane. In 1981 he was an honors graduate from Central High School in Victoria, Virginia. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Government in 1986 from the College of William and Mary. He earned a Masters of Education, concentration in Educational Administration, in 1995, also from the College of William and Mary. He worked as a Social Studies teacher and coach at West Point High School in West Point, Virginia, served as an Assistant Administrator, teacher, and coach at Essex High School in Tappahannock, Virginia, and worked as an Assistant Principal at Charles City High School in Charles City, Virginia. He is currently employed in Chesterfield County as an Assistant Principal where he served at Providence Middle School, Robious Middle School, and now serves at Carver Middle School.

Butch presented papers at the 2007 and 2008 annual conferences of the South Atlantic Philosophy of Education Society (SAPES). The first, entitled *Equity or Adequacy? The Answer is Unclear, but Technology May Help Bridge the Gap*, was published in the 2008 SAPES yearbook of best papers presented at the annual conference. The second, entitled *The Effect of Cyberbullying: The Dark Side of Building Bridges with Technology*, was published in the 2009 SAPES annual yearbook. He also chaired a paper session at the 2009 national conference, “Democratic Education in the Spirit of John

Dewey,” celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the noted educational philosopher; held at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, the paper session was entitled *Contemporary Schooling and Democratic Ends*.

Butch is happily married to his wonderfully supportive wife, Melissa. Their family consists of three children, Christian, Colin, and Sarah Kathryn, and two cats. He is a proud member of Winfree Memorial Baptist Church in Midlothian, Virginia, where he plays acoustic guitar (and, occasionally, the drums and congas) in the contemporary worship band.